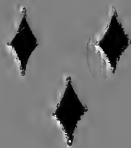


SAINT MAGLOIRE

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DORGELES



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SAINT MAGLOIRE

MONSIEUR DORGELES, the author of the famous war book, *Croix de Bois*, won a deserved reputation for bravery during the war, and in this novel he shows a courage of another kind. Magloire Dubourg, commonly known as Saint Magloire, returns to his own country after forty years spent as a lay missionary. His reputation has preceded him, he is known as a miracle worker and a mighty teacher, and when he lands in France crowds immediately flock to hear him. From this point onward Mons. Dorgelès traces the progress of the saint and its effect on contemporary French minds, peasants and bourgeois, with a fine and impartial sincerity.

SAINT MAGLOIRE

by

ROLAND DORGELES

Translated by

PAULINE DE CHARY



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SAINT MAGLOIRE

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PROLOGUE

THE Havas Agency reports :

Marseilles, May 18. This afternoon at 4 o'clock St. Magloire set foot in France.

It was anticipated that the return of the well-known traveller would attract vast numbers of spectators, but no one foresaw that the event would produce such a tumultuous demonstration.

The local papers had announced the time of his arrival, and long before the "Plata" had made port a huge crowd collected on the platform of the Harbour Station, and in the neighbouring streets. The police, surprised by these unexpected throngs, promptly threw a cordon round the landing stage.

Neither the Prefect nor the Bishop was represented : but a number of priests and missionaries, who have recently returned from Africa, were to be seen in the crowd.

Directly the gangway was lowered, the onlookers rushed to the landing stage, and burst right through the cordon. For some moments there was pandemonium. The men shouted and cheered St. Magloire, while the women threw flowers and kisses.

The saint was soon recognised, thanks to a photograph which had already made his features familiar. The crowd wanted to carry him in triumph, but the explorer, who has retained all his youthful strength in spite of his sixty years, valiantly resisted the attempt. Escorted by over five thousand people, he had no easy task in reaching his hotel. Traffic had to be held up all along the route, for the human wave surged over the Quai La Joliette and the Rue de la Republique.

We noted one amusing detail: some over-ardent admirers had refused to permit the Evangelist of the negroes to carry his own bag; and, when he reached his destination, the bag could not be found. His unscrupulous followers had probably shared its contents as relics among themselves.

The crowd, in spite of the police reinforcements which had been called to the spot, was only scattered with great difficulty. The people massed in front of the Hotel, and clamoured for the saint with such insistence that he was at last obliged to appear on the balcony and beg them to return to their homes.

We should have been glad to obtain a few minutes' interview with the illustrious traveller and to ask him the reason for his return to France after an exile of forty years, also whether he was definitely abandoning his apostleship; but Magloire Dubourg would see no one.

Towards the end of the afternoon he walked to the church of St. Vincent de Paul, where he remained in prayer for some time. On being recognised by the public in the streets he met with an impassioned demonstration.

We are assured that St. Magloire will leave to-night for Paris.

CHAPTER I

A WHITE house, half hidden by lime trees; a spacious lawn that shone like varnish, with clumps of dwarf rose-bushes, bordered with marigolds; lilacs here and there; and, separating the house from the road, a small park crossed by zig-zag walks: all of this could be seen from outside through the bars of the railings. The trees were alive with chirping nests, and the invisible hose of a gardener sprayed the air with its limpid murmur. The pillar of the entrance bore the following inscription in Gothic characters, engraved in the stone:

The King's Domain.

The Dubourgs spent the summer here from May till October. François Dubourg, the popular novelist, had bought this property about fifteen years ago, some little time before the war of 1914, out of the proceeds of his first success and—whether from gratitude, superstition, or mere vaingloriousness—he had christened the house after his serial, *The King's Domain*."

The Barlincourt people when they talked of the Dubourg's villa called it "The House of Happiness."

From the outside nothing could ever be heard but laughter, the sound of games, mad scamperings over the gravel paths, Yvonne's fragile voice singing at the piano, and the clarion calls of the novelist, whose mania it was to shout his orders to the servants through the window of his study. He said he did this "to keep his ideas in order." The habitation itself breathed happiness: a fragrance that varied at every step: the perfume of flowers in the garden,

the smell of delicate cookery within, the iris-scented linen in the bedrooms.

This afternoon Mme. Dubourg had placed her couch in her favourite spot on the terrace which stretched between the villa and the out-buildings, a village in miniature, with the old lime tree, and the well with its worn kerb. The air was hot as midsummer. All was still, as though the slightest movement would bring exhaustion. The refreshing hum of the hose watering the lawn alone broke the stillness. . . .

Mme. Dubourg was hovering between wakefulness and sleep. She had come to that exquisite moment when under closed lids vague dreams glide to and fro. Consciousness lies in abeyance; thoughts fade as they come, like the vain circles that ripple the surface of a pool. She knew her children were near; her whole happiness lay within the railings of her garden. Her son had already attempted to paint her in this pose: an unconscious little smile upon her lips, a dimple hidden in her cheek, her round arm drooping.

Motionless, with half open eyes, she revelled in her quiet happiness: a swallow flying overhead, streaking through the air with its shrill cry, the silvery swaying of a big tree, the gardener's rake stroking caressingly over the gravel. . . . Nothing either harsh or disturbing anywhere. Gradually she was slipping into a doze, not even taking the trouble to turn away her head from the speck of sun which burned her cheek. Her reverie was growing evanescent, conscious only of the blue soul of the sweet-smelling lilac.

She felt herself dropping into sleep, but at the last moment, with an effort, she pulled herself up with a jerk, and sat erect on the couch. Yvonne at her side was laughing.

"You were falling asleep."

Her mother glanced at her, and scolded laughingly.

"And you were letting me. Of course, you don't

mind my becoming fat, you don't mind having a horrid, enormous mother. I simply must keep awake, so give me my book. It has fallen into the well."

The girl, without showing any surprise, stood up, and bending over the kerb she picked up the book, which was not even wet. It had been one of M. François Dubourg's fancies to have this sham well constructed on the terrace; in his opinion "it made a good impression" and looked very rustic.

This same passion for rusticity had lured him on to transform the porter's lodge—an unassuming little hole which did not please him—into a sort of gabled mansion of the worst Old Paris style.

The inhabitants of Barlincourt had grown used to it by now: but at first they used to stare at the mullioned windows, the grinning gargoyles, the sham beams, the rusty signboard which creaked in the wind. M. Dubourg, wishing to add to the picturesque appearance of the villa, had a sundial painted on the front of the outbuildings. He had drawn the divisions himself by the shadow of a rod fixed in the wall, ignoring all details of meridian height, angular distances, and other gnomonical rules. It was a real freak, this fantastic timepiece that told the time in a way of its own and gave the lie to all the clocks in the countryside. By dint of consulting it, however, the Dubourgs had come to understand something of its eccentric information, and the dial, after all, gave them the time to within a quarter of an hour. As for the novelist, the mere sight on the wall of the lyrical motto that he had composed: "My hours are born and die with thee, O Sun Divine!" was enough to make him happy.

Consulting the sundial, cut in two by the shadow of the needle, Mme. Dubourg exclaimed:

"What, past three! How the time flies! It is perfectly dreadful. Run along quickly and tell Adèle that your father is coming back from Paris by the

six o'clock train, and that we'll dine a little earlier than usual."

The girl went off towards the kitchen and Mme. Dubourg began to read, absent-mindedly running her paper-cutter through the loose curls of her hair.

Yvonne delivered her message to the cook, whom she found shelling peas, and then skipped along to her brother, who was painting in the poultry-yard.

"Will you have a game of tennis, Gérard?" she asked across the wire-netting.

"Not just now, it is still too hot," answered the young man, keeping his back turned to her. "Besides, I want to finish this first."

"You won't come? All right! Then I'll shoo your models away."

And pushing open the door of the enclosure, she ran in, clapping her hands, her skirts a-flutter in the wind. At her approach there ensued a noisy stampede of hens with flapping wings and geese with outstretched necks. Ducklings tumbled down, beak first, unable to keep on their flat feet; rabbits fled towards the hazels, carrying off a blade of grass to nibble on the way.

Gérard, from his campstool, followed his sister with his eyes.

"How clever of you! Just wait till your next piano-lesson; you'll hear some jazz-band, I promise you."

But already, without listening to him, she had gone into the hen-house to look for eggs. The young man squeezed some red on to his palette, and with light touches went on with the painting of his turkey.

"The turkey," he said as he painted, "is the 'bourgeois' of the poultry-yard. He is proud of looking different from the others, even if the only difference is a goitre. The hen and the turkey are certainly the stupidest animals of all. Don't you think so?"

The man he was addressing sat near his easel, on

a tree stump: an oldish man, badly dressed, and wearing a cap several sizes too large. He gazed in front of him with watery eyes, and snivelled continually as he talked. The thick grey moustache, that drooped over his mouth, swallowed half his words.

"Why, sure enough, they are not clever; but there, I don't know much about poultry, and as to turkeys, I must say I don't know what they taste like. . . . It isn't a working man's food."

Gérard, busy in trying to find a certain colour on his palette, was silent for a moment. Then:

"Still, you can't complain. Counting what Mr. Aubernon gives you, you can live decently. . . . Lots of working men haven't got so much."

The man looked down at his old shoes:

"Well, of course, I don't want to run down Aubernon; he treats me fair. Before he got so rich, we used to work together at the same bench, him and me, and we were pals. Still, that is no reason why he should give me a pension. It was during the war he made his pile. Some say it wasn't always on the square, but that's no business of ours. Five years ago, when I was all tied up in knots with rheumatics, he said to me at once: 'Don't you worry, Mathieu. I'll see to it that you keep going.' And so I live. . . . Still, there it is: he has become a boss and I am still a poor working man. You, being a socialist, can understand."

The young man went on with his painting, scarcely listening, for he was used to Mathieu and his recriminations. After a while the old man added, for caution's sake:

"I'm only saying all this, just because we're talking about it, you know. But if some day Miss Yvonne married young Aubernon, as folks are saying, you won't repeat anything to the old man, will you? He's got so terribly proud, it's making him downright wicked."

"All right. You needn't be afraid."

The animals, having recovered from their fright, had gone back to their various occupations. A pullet, with what looked like strapped trousers, the feathers reaching to its spurs, pecked away at the hair of a kid that was lying on the ground. Geese were parading up and down in single file, limping and heavy of rump. In front of an open hutch, rabbits, squatting head to head, rubbed their malicious little noses together, probably slandering the fowls. Others, not really hungry, were eating just for something to do, and from a distance one could see the tips of their ears twitching.

Gérard was sketching them swiftly, catching their outlines at a glance. Mathieu had got up and was watching him.

"It really is funny," he said. "But to my mind photography is more profitable, because it's quicker. The other day, young Aubernon took my portrait, and it's me to a T."

Two little bristling cocks were fighting. First they stared at each other, then slowly bent their heads, watching warily for their chance; then flew furiously together, screeching and flapping their wings. A goose, with her yellow beak wide open, looked on, hissing angrily.

"All the same," the old man went on, "I call them funny ways of making a living: you making pictures, M. Dubourg writing stories. . . . Why, I've just been reading *The Red Bastard* that the Dumarchey girl lent me. You can't believe such things as that really happen. There's no doubt but it's exciting, . . . only . . ."

He stood, swaying back and forth, with his hands in his pockets, looking for fine words to express his thoughts. Then he concluded sententiously, raising his heavy drunkard's eyes:

"Only these things they don't improve the minds of the people, and that's a pity."

Gérard, busy with his work, did not reply. He was painting furiously, puckering his forehead and biting his lips. The workman had sat down again, his legs having quickly failed him. He quite enjoyed being at the "King's Domain." Once Mr. Aubernon, his old boss, had sent him to repair the lawn-mower, and ever since then he turned up from time to time to spend the afternoon there, offering to do all kinds of odd jobs, locks that wanted seeing to or tools that needed sharpening. Thus he often earned two or three francs, and was always given a good glass of wine. Besides this, he was glad to show Moucron, whom he had hated ever since their school-days, that the gentry took notice of him.

He began again after a few minutes' silence, "So it seems that your famous uncle is coming back to France after all. It was in the paper this morning."

Gérard shook his head.

"I don't believe it. This is at least the twentieth time they have announced his arrival and up to now it has never come true. If he had actually started he would have let my father know."

The workman looked worried.

"Tell me," he said, "is he really and truly a saint, like the ones in the calendar?"

The absurd question brought a smile to the young man's face.

"I really don't know," he answered. "You would have to ask the Pope about that."

Mathieu shook his head.

"Well, well, wouldn't he be surprised to find a nephew of his with ideas like yours?"

The idle talk was beginning to bore Gérard Dubourg. He liked to paint by himself, under the old twisted apple trees in whose branches the hens roosted at night. The park skirted the poultry yard, each gust of wind bringing from it, with a mass of whirling leaves, the strong and acrid fragrance of the firs. On the other side of the wall lay the kitchen garden

where Louis, the cook's nephew, could be heard whistling softly at his work.

"Well," said the painter, standing up, "that's enough for to-day. The sun has moved and the light is no longer good enough."

Someone probably recognised his voice, for a shout came from across the wall:

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Gérard, how are things with you?"

"Good-afternoon, Moucron," the young man answered, as he folded up his easel. "Here I am, with one of your best friends."

"Oh, I can guess who you mean," the voice went on scornfully. "It's Mathieu, the old black-guard, with you again. . . . Good afternoon, Mathieu! I know him, he'll jabber more than he'll work."

The workman did not look as though he appreciated the jest.

"So do I know him," he grumbled. "And I'd rather be in the poor-house than have made my money the way he has. They've got so much pride, those peasants, they have so much land they don't know what to do with it, and yet they go on piling up money. I can remember some rotten tricks he played, in our young days. . . . Now see here, we used to have a cask of wine tapped in front of the Town Hall every 14th July, 'for the poor' as they say. Well, that scoundrel was always the first to turn up at the cask, and even then he wouldn't drink honestly from the cup. He must needs take his wine away in quarts, said he'd rather drink it at home. He would come back fifteen or twenty times running, and he managed to store up enough for the whole harvest time. . . . And do you know what he did to save himself from being blackguarded by the others? He'd pretend to be as drunk as a lord, and he'd sing at the top of his voice, and stagger about, but anyone could tell

you he was no more drunk than you or I are now. That's the kind of man he is. . . . If you respect the likes of him, well, you're wrong, that's all."

Mathieu touched his cap, bade Gérard a curt good-bye, and walked off, turning into the pantry on his way. Gérard put his palette away and went into the house. His sister was already waiting for him, bouncing her tennis ball up and down on the terrace with her wiry little hand.

"Ah! There you are, at last. . . . Hurry up, get your racket. . . . Mother, we are off. We'll meet father at the station."

Just then, Mme. Dubourg, who was binding a twig of honeysuckle to its stake, turned towards the garden door which had slammed to, and gave a cry of surprise.

"Why, there he is," she exclaimed, as she caught sight of her husband at the other end of the path. "Something must have happened."

She ran to meet him. M. François Dubourg was moving quickly, wiping his forehead as he walked; he carried his large grey felt hat in his hand. His hair, which was beginning to turn grey, was long and brushed back, and he wore a moustache turned up at the ends and a pointed beard; but the mild expression that his thick glasses lent him destroyed any pretensions to a martial appearance, and after all he looked more like a photographer than a musketeer. His usually smiling face was grave. His wife understood at once.

"Your brother?" she questioned.

M. Dubourg gave her no direct answer. Including her with the children, he said:

"I have something to say to you."

All three gazed at him, puzzled. The novelist laid his hat on the kerb, planted his walking-stick in the well, as though it were an umbrella-stand, and began leisurely:

"Your uncle, the Saint, will be here to-night. . . ."

.

Ever since their earliest childhood Yvonne and Gérard could remember hearing about the Saint. Either by force of habit, or from a somewhat childish pride, M. Dubourg never called him anything but "Your uncle the Saint," and not a single day went by without reference to him. He was at once the protector, the adviser and the bogey of the family; and from the other side of the earth, invisible but always present, it was his influence which had guided these children, whose names he probably did not even know. As babies, they used to be threatened with :—

"Wait till your uncle the Saint comes back" . . .

Later on, when they were old enough to understand, the honour which this relationship conferred was explained to them, and soon they, in turn, began to entertain their playfellows with tales of the adventures of their hero.

No one could have foreseen, forty years earlier, that a day would come when Magloire Dubourg would be the pride of his family, far less that he would become a saint. At that time he was a child of few words, energetic, extremely gentle, but subject to sudden fits of passion which terrified his mother. He went to church diligently, but never seemed to feel a call to the religious life. What he wanted to do was to live in the country and be a farmer on a large scale; and with this end in view he studied for three years at an agricultural college. He left it to do the year of military service, due from the eldest son of a widow. He then came back to Ambérieu; but it was evident that his soldiering had not made him more lively or more talkative. On the contrary, he was more reserved than ever. Among the people

about him, it was always supposed that he was going to buy land, but he discussed his plans with no one, not even with his mother.

One night, on her return home, Mme. Dubourg found a letter from her son, bidding her farewell:

"I am leaving for the Colonies," he explained without further details. "A true Christian cannot rest as long as there exists in the world a single man who does not believe in God. I am going to save souls."

The first thought of the poor widow was that Magloire had gone mad, the more so as he had left with his letter a bundle of securities, amounting to nearly the whole of his paternal inheritance, with this inscription from the Gospel: "Thou shalt take nothing with thee on the road." This money he wished to have distributed among the poor.

The police were hurriedly notified and inquiries set afoot. Some people declared they had seen young Dubourg getting into a train with a former servant girl from the "Golden Lion"; others told a tale of his having been seen on the banks of the river Ain, and presumed that he had been drowned. Apart from his mother, nobody believed in this sudden vocation; none of the Fathers of the Foreign Missions, neither the Lazarists nor the White Fathers, had ever heard of the young man. His name did not appear on the passenger lists of the shipping companies, and the magistrate came to the conclusion that he must be hiding in Paris with some woman. However, as he was of age and there was no charge to bring against him, the police could not be set on his track. In the end he would surely give some sign of life.

Years went by and still there was no news of him. Everyone pitied Madame Dubourg for having such a son, and the poor woman gradually lost the courage to stand up for him when people spoke of him.

"He may be dead," she sighed, still trying to find excuses for him.

Moreover, it was François, the younger of her boys, who had always been her favourite, and he, fortunately, gave her nothing but satisfaction. He had no sooner left college than he began to write, and his name soon began to appear in the Paris papers.

"It is the most one could hope for," said her friends, "that out of two sons only one should turn out badly."

François Dubourg, when approached about his brother, put on the air of importance which suited his new rôle as the eldest son of a widow.

"I would never have believed Magloire capable of such baseness. It is always safer to mistrust these silent natures. He had better not show his face again here!" he said.

Of course, the money of the prodigal son had not been given to the poor as he had so definitely requested. Mme. Dubourg had invested it in a first mortgage which doubled her little income, and considered that she had wronged no one by doing so. Besides, she had confided in her father confessor about this, and he had given his approval.

Not until two years after his flight did Mme. Dubourg receive the first letter from her son, bearing the Konakry stamp. Magloire was wandering about Guinea, living from hand to mouth, harassed by the authorities. He did not complain of his lot, neither did he talk of coming home.

"For Heaven's sake, don't tell anyone about this," François had urged his mother. "Remember, he is living like a tramp; it would do me no end of harm."

More letters had come at long intervals, sometimes months, sometimes as much as a year. The countries changed from time to time, but the vague phrases he wrote were always the same. Since he wandered from the Ivory Coast into the very heart of Africa, with no fixed abode and no headquarters, it was not even possible to answer his letters.

"Let us forget all about him. He has gone astray and is lost to us," the young author, who by this time had given up poetry in favour of more lucrative work, said at last, "he will certainly end up in prison."

But seven or eight years after the disappearance of Magloire Dubourg somebody showed his brother a Belgian newspaper which was publishing letters from Gaboon.

"Look, here is a reference to your brother."

The younger brother, uneasy, took the paper and read, with cheeks that suddenly flushed scarlet. He was prepared for the worst, but little by little the strained expression of his face relaxed; the news after all was not so bad.

The correspondent, an agent of a timber company, wrote that in travelling through the forests of the Crystal Mountains, where at that time there was great unrest, he had come across a most peculiar character, a sort of lay missionary, who was held in great respect by the natives. This man roamed untiringly through the forests and the chaotic mountains of Omvan, always unarmed, tending the sick and making peace between rival chiefs. It had been due to him that a small census expedition, which had been attacked as it entered the village of Nkassia, had not been massacred.

When he read this carefully, François Dubourg declared :

"I am not surprised. To be sure, he is cracked, but he has got pluck; he is a character."

From that day onward he no longer tried to change the subject when questioned about his brother; he spoke of him with a sort of chaffing regard and tender commiseration.

"He is converting the niggers," he said, shrugging his shoulders.

However, from time to time French papers seemed interested in the strange explorer. This happened

for the first time in connection with a rising of native tribes on the banks of the Pama. Magloire Dubourg who had gone into the M'Poko country to save a few white men imprisoned in a factory, had been captured by the rebel chief. The latter had bound him and thrown him on an ant-hill with another prisoner, a militiaman, to be eaten alive. A few hours later, when the natives returned, nothing remained of the militiaman but a skeleton still covered with swarming ants; but Magloire Dubourg, spared by a miracle, was found quietly resting a few steps away.

This fantastic adventure gave rise to the legend of Magloire Dubourg. He was mentioned again in connection with an expedition among the M'bi cannibals, into whose hands some native women had fallen who had recently been converted by the Fathers; and yet again when, during his tours on the banks of the Niari, he collected for the Catholic Mission of Bouenza dozens of small niggers whom he had rescued from the agents of the slave traders.

François Dubourg, whose respect for his brother had grown since the papers had begun to talk about him, now had his name continually on his lips. He carried "My brother Magloire" to the point of excess. He awaited his letters with impatience, because he wished to read them in public, and, when they were worth it he published them in the papers, spinning out the text at need and adding finishing touches.

At the time of the final fight again Samory, Magloire Dubourg was in the Sudan. Alone as usual and unarmed, he betook himself to Dabkala, the residence of the black Napoleon, and before long he assumed a strange ascendancy over the Mussulman. Rumour had it that he spoke firmly, even brutally, to him. He reproached him for his raids and his massacres; and he had, by sheer threats, saved more than one invested post and obtained the pardon of entire tribes of Dkimini, whom the Sofas were about to destroy.

Giving up deliberately all hope of coming out alive,

he remained at Samory's side as long as the war lasted, the only white man among those fanatical blacks. In the end he became profoundly attached to the wandering emperor, who for six years retreated step by step before the French troops, carrying all his subjects with him. When the hour of defeat struck for the Almany, he followed him to Gabun, to that island of Ogooué where the black conqueror found his St. Helena. During those two years, from 1896 to 1898, the fame of Magloire Dubourg spread over the whole world. His grim independence added still further to his renown. This strange man, to whom his country owed so much, would never consent to the official receptions arranged for him by Governors; and Lt. Col. Bertin, who had been ordered to convey to him the thanks of the Government after the crushing of Samory, never succeeded in reaching him. The Evangelist associated with no one but the missionaries, who commonly talked of him as "a saint"; and this name clung to him, for only a saint could have led that sublime and vagrant existence.

Already he was credited with more than one miracle : living people cured, a blind Sudanese singer whose sight he had restored, his crossing of the Bandama dry-footed when pursued by the N'Dénous, a hundred improbable stories, invented, no doubt, by credulous negroes and spread by colonials whose brains were inflamed by fever, climate and alcohol. Finally a young Colonial administrator, who had seen him seated on the banks of a river at the foot of a tree whose trunk was covered with phosphorescent mushrooms, came in a great fright to Bingerville. He related how with his own eyes he had seen Magloire Dubourg, surrounded by an immense halo so luminous that it lighted up every detail of his garments. This tale, when it reached the papers, impressed the public more than all the achievements of the Christian traveller.

François Dubourg was no longer embarrassed when the "apostle" was mentioned, far from it. One

exploit piled on another turned Magloire Dubourg into a legendary hero in the eyes of the crowd, a superman, God's latest messenger; and the novelist began to boast of the relationship of which he had been so long ashamed. The existence of the widow Dubourg henceforth centred in her love for the big son whom she had lost; it was of him she thought in the morning at Mass, it was almost to him that she prayed.

The poor woman died without being granted the joy of seeing her child again. On the day of the funeral, a small incident occurred which caused a profound impression. A raven followed the procession from the house to the cemetery, flying very low; and during the service the bird perched on the roof of the church, as if waiting for the funeral train to come out.

"It is the Saint following his mother," the old women whispered.

At the cemetery the raven hovered croaking above the open grave and then resumed his unwieldy flight towards the woods; leaving amongst those present, even the least credulous of them, a queer impression of distress.

The whole press reported this fact for its mere strangeness, and Mme. Dubourg, who had just married the young novelist, never forgot it.

The friend of the negroes returned to Gabun, following Samory to the island where he was to die, and soon afterwards resumed his apostleship among the Pahouins. More conversions, more miracles followed; and the Paris newspapers, when short of exciting crimes wherewith to fill their columns, fell back on Saint Magloire, since every mail brought tidings of fresh feats. François began to realise that he owed his rapid rise to fame as much to the reputation of his brother as to the merits of his own novels.

The Vatican had instituted inquiries about this lay missionary, whose noisy celebrity was giving rise to uneasiness; but the Fathers of the Foreign Missions, the only people who really knew the traveller,

honoured him as the worthiest of them all, and Rome wisely contented itself with ignoring the wonder-worker. Magloire Dubourg, who was already popular with the natives of the colony, soon became more powerful in the Gabun than all the tribal chiefs, and was better obeyed than the Lieutenant-Governor himself. He could wander in safety through the forests of Mayombe; none but the wild beasts would have dared attack him. The natives even declared that the animals were afraid of him, and stories of many such happenings were circulated. They had filled a whole number of the *Lectures pour Tous*.

One day when Saint Magloire was landing at Cotonou, his canoe capsized as it was crossing the bar, and the Saint was seen struggling in the midst of sharks whose furious tails lashed the water. Yet none had bitten him, and the Saint had climbed without a scratch into the canoe which came to rescue him. A similar adventure befell him with the alligators of the Niari. In the Bateke Desert he was surprised by a panther: the wild beast gazed at him, submissive, as once the lions gazed at Daniel in the den, and the Loango porters, when they came up with him, killed it with their assegais. In the Lower Likouala, he once encountered a herd of buffalo fleeing before a bush fire. The massive brutes with their short glossy horns rushed past him in an infernal gallop, yet not one grazed him; the Evangelist was safe among the denizens of the forest.

Wherever he settled down, Saint Magloire kept bees. He loved to hear around him the humming of the swarms, and he taught the natives to set hives. He had never been stung: one day when those agile little hunters, the Babingas, were becoming dangerous after a stormy palaver with the Evangelist, the bees swooped upon them in hundreds and put them to rout, harassing them with their stings and making them howl. All these small facts swelled the legend of Saint Magloire: he stood for all that was miraculous in a commonplace

age, he represented adventure for stay-at-home dreamers and, for believers, the supernatural.

Before the delimitation of the Congo-Cameroon frontier in 1912 he thrilled Europe by a new exploit. At that time the region of the Voleu N'Tem was in a state of constant disturbance. Commercial agents were roughly treated; tax-collectors were often received with shots; and the proximity of the still badly defined German frontier made repression more difficult. At every moment the native farmers complained of being raided; every month there were new rapes of women, and the militia never succeeded in catching up with the evil-doers, who fled towards the East as soon as they had brought off a coup.

The Essobams were the first to revolt openly. They made an incursion into the Bitam territory, attacked the chief of the sub-division, killing a dozen of his men. Then they fell back, carrying off an agent of the N'Goko Sangha, his wife and child, whom they brought to the other side of the N'Tem, into Ekoreti territory, of which no one could say if it was French, German, or independent. This district, which was practically in the hands of German revenue-farmers, had become the refuge of all the individuals who were wanted by the authorities of one country or another, an asylum which the negroes considered inviolable, and a meeting-place for all the plunderers and murderers of the Cameroons and the Gabun. The Governor-General of Equatorial Africa had received formal instructions to avoid any frontier incidents; orders were therefore given to the boundary troops not to pursue offenders beyond the N'Tem. This attitude further encouraged the rebels, and as French detachments had captured isolated groups of Essobams, the chiefs made it known by emissaries that they were going to behead their three hostages by way of reprisals.

Magloire Dubourg, who was staying at the Catholic Mission of Libreville, promptly left his retreat and started for the N'Tem, cutting his way through two

hundred miles of undergrowth and forest infested by rebels, and by rivers where the stations had been destroyed. He penetrated into Ekoreti territory to ask the Essobam chief to release his white captives: it was too late, the crime had been committed, and only the child was still alive. Around the unruffled saint whirled a saraband of infuriated negroes, clamouring to tear him in pieces there and then. Among the blacks was a deserter, a rifleman, who had lived in the towns and there had learnt the meaning of the word Christian. He explained it to the others with great bursts of laughter and contortions, and then proposed that the white sorcerer should be crucified like his God. The savages erected a cross. They then laid the saint upon it and the torture began. Two large nails were driven through his hands without wresting a single complaint from him. His face did not contract; with closed eyes he waited, thinking of a similar torture, and his lips still gave thanks to his Divine Master. He may, however, have been on the point of fainting from pain and loss of blood, when a great noise was heard at the entrance of the village and firing broke out. It was the Pahouins who, warned of the capture of the saint, had taken up arms, crossed the N'Tem and come to rescue him.

A terrible fight raged among the huts and the palm-groves. The Essobams and their followers, for the moment taken by surprise, entrenched themselves behind the stockades, loaded their flintlocks, and deluged their assailants with arrows and assegais. The loyal natives, whose ranks had been joined by militiamen, impetuously rushed forward, shooting, jabbing with their lances, and a dreadful hand-to-hand fight ensued right inside the houses, through whose shattered doors came the clamouring of slaughter. But for the intervention of the saint, the rebels would have been massacred to the last man.

On the next day the victorious Pahouins re-entered

Oyem, bringing back their friend, and for weeks afterwards the coloured covers of the illustrated papers displayed the scene in all the booksellers' windows and kiosks in France: the miraculous return of Saint Magloire, holding the rescued child in his bleeding hands, as Saint Antony or Saint Joseph are pictured holding the Divine Child.

François Dubourg was interviewed once again, but as he knew nothing more than he had read in the papers, editors, for want of something better, published the photograph of Gérard, the little nephew of Saint Magloire, who, it seemed, was very much like him.

During the War Magloire Dubourg distinguished himself in Africa; it was due more to him than anyone else—more even than to the few detachments at the disposal of the authorities—that the occupation of the Cameroons was achieved without losses; and when risings occurred on the Upper Ivory Coast on the borders of the Sudan, he alone was able to pacify the rebels. After peace was signed, Saint Magloire's return to France was announced more than once. The letters which he continued to send to his brother from time to time left room for hope; but something always intervened, and the wonderful old man, still tireless, took up his helmet, his long drill mantle and his copper crucifix, and set off again, northward, southward, through undergrowth or swamp, carrying on his never ending task.

So it happened that, without Papal Bull or Papal Court, Magloire Dubourg, son of an Ambérieu tradesman, had become a saint, canonised only by the voice of the people, which, they say, is the voice of God.

M. François Dubourg knew little about his brother's journey. He had received nothing from him but a short wire from Marseilles announcing his early arrival at Barlincourt.

"It may be to-night or it may be to-morrow," he explained in an unsteady voice, but we must be ready.

He, who usually accepted all happenings with the

same indifferent smile, seemed quite upset. It was not so much the idea of seeing his brother again, as the prospect of playing host to a saint.

"You must realise that it is a great event," he said, running his hands nervously through his hair. "Everybody will want to see him."

The two young people listened to their father. Yvonne was quite pale, Gérard was quivering with excitement. Madame Dubourg lost her head at once and started to run to the kitchen to order the banquet.

"Where are you off to now?" her husband, who usually left her a free hand with the housekeeping, asked peremptorily. "Stay here! . . . My brother always had very simple tastes, and I am sure they are even more so now that his . . ."

He hunted with knitted brows for the right word.

" . . . that his exalted position imposes new obligations on him. You will be kind enough to leave your silver and cut glass alone. . . . Let us be simple, as simple as possible."

He inspected his children with a look that was almost stern and quite new to them.

"You," he said to Gérard, "will begin by changing. . . . What on earth do you look like with that shirt open to the middle of your chest? . . . Elegance doesn't matter, but we must have decency. . . . As for you, Yvonne, I advise you not to laugh and hum as you generally do at meals. . . . And please, no piano. . . . And put up your hair: it looks more proper. . . ."

"And what about the cooking?" Mme. Dubourg, quite upset, asked timidly.

"Simple, as simple as possible. My brother is very temperate."

"We were to have had asparagus for an entrée," said Mme. Dubourg apologetically, "and I ordered an orange soufflé."

M. Dubourg shrugged his shoulders.

"A soufflé! You must be mad. Why not

champagne? Nothing more than a little meat, some vegetables, and stewed fruit. And very little wine. And no more pastry or sweets on the table as long as Magloire is here; do you understand?"

The novelist seemed to enjoy this hectoring attitude, to which he was not accustomed.

"Now," he said, with a worried air, "I wonder whether we ought not to re-arrange the house a little."

He ran up the steps of the terrace, dragging his family after him.

The decorations of the villa were eccentric enough. M. François Dubourg, always enamoured of sham rusticity and false antiques, had furnished his dining-room like the living-room of a farm or an inn. It would have looked well enough with the big wild-cherry wood chest, the dresser covered with pewter, the spinning wheel, and the table with its heavy turned legs, if he had not been inspired to add carved stools by way of seats, and two massive benches from a Norman dairy. No one had ever been able to sit on them—they were too hard—and he had been obliged to buy real chairs, and keep the others for show.

"Very good," said the novelist, as he complacently surveyed his favourite room. "Very dignified. . . ."

The drawing room was unobjectionable: it was the only apartment, besides her bedroom, that Mme. Dubourg had been able to furnish as she liked. All the rest of the house had been given over to an architect-decorator, whom François Dubourg had known at Montparnasse in the heroic days of the Art Nouveau, and the artist had given free run to his fancy.

The staircase looked like an aviary, with its frieze covered with brilliantly painted birds and foliage. Yvonne's room gave the impression of an aquarium, with the dim light softened by green curtains, and no one but an expert would have recognised a bed in the mound of cushions piled up in a corner.

"Take all this away," ordered the novelist, passing

from room to room. "And the artificial plants, too, and the screen. . . . Take it all away. . . ."

A pattern of thistles adorned all the furniture indiscriminately. The wood was set in a zig-zag lozenge design, and the uncomfortable chairs had high backs like choir-stalls and narrow seats like bracket-seats in a theatre. In his daughter's room, M. Dubourg made them remove a Japanese print which showed two naked women in a rice swamp.

"And yet," Mme. Dubourg pointed out with surprise, "you thought that quite proper for a young girl, and now for a man of sixty . . ."

M. Dubourg almost lost his temper :

"How can you compare the two? Yvonne is not a saint, she——." Then, seeing that the child was quite distressed, he added, with a kiss :—

"She is an angel."

M. François Dubourg also noticed that there were no sacred pictures on the walls, and he had some, which were found in Adèle's room and in the attic, hung up at random.

"Another crucifix here," he ordered, pointing to an empty panel. "Can't we find any more? Well, go and buy one. . . . Where? How should I know? Not at the grocer's, certainly. . . . Mother Pelé will tell you."

At last, having scoured the villa from garret to cellar, the novelist declared himself satisfied, and he kissed the children, his good humour quite restored.

"Well, so you are going to meet him after all, your uncle the saint," he said to them in a voice which trembled a little. "I believe it is the greatest day of my life."

Night had come. The whole house was asleep; only in the kitchen a light was still burning.

The charwoman was washing up dishes, while Adèle carefully sharpened the knives before she put them away.

Louis, her nephew, was seated at the table with the gardener and their friend Milot, who had dropped in. They were drinking white wine, clinking glasses each time they refilled them. In a corner the dog, "Turk," was sleeping with his nose between his paws, his dreams punctuated with happy growls. Through the open window came the great silence of the fields, and the voices of the three men resounded in the night. When the cook passed in front of the light her magnified shadow crossed the lawn on a magic white square. Each puff of wind shivering in the branches brought a fragrance of lilacs and pinks; it was as though the night itself was breathing.

"They have not eaten much," said the charwoman, setting down the last pile of dishes. "Waiting spoiled their appetite. It was nearly ten o'clock when they sat down to dinner; when it got so late I knew he wouldn't come. It won't be before to-morrow."

Milot sniggered, staring at the bottom of his glass.

"They do make me laugh with their saint," he jeered. "Talk of stuffing people's heads with nonsense! Such rot as they've been made to swallow in the way of miracles, all those boobies that have never seen any colonies but Bois-Colombes. . . ."

Adèle, who had just put on her glasses to read the paper, turned her head.

"Don't make fun in that way, Milot, you know I don't like it."

The gardener drained the bottle.

"Tut, tut! everyone has his own opinions about that," he said soothingly. "Anyhow this man has been jolly useful in Africa; everybody says so. This story, now, about how the niggers wanted to crucify him, that's something out of the way, you know."

Milot had risen and was holding on to the table, to prevent his wooden leg from slipping on the tiled floor.

"Do you think they can stuff my head full of catechism?" he said, craning his neck forward. "It's

bad enough to be turned into a blinking sacristan, just because the bosses insist. As soon as I get out of church I don't believe anything. . . . What about you, Petit Louis? You're emancipated; do you believe in their yarns about the saint? They can't get over me, you know. I know those colonies, I did my two years' service in the desert. I've been in those troops, so you can't fool me. . . . Your Magloire—he could never have beaten the Arabs like we did at Timimoun, for all he's so clever. You wanted something more than fairy-tales to lick those Harka chiefs with."

"That isn't the point," Étienne tried to explain, "'they don't tell you. . . .'"

But Milot would not stop:

"You may fool other people that way, but you can't fool me," he continued. "It's a put-up job with his brother, a regular cinema plot. They have worked out the fraud on the sly and got it into the papers; and now the other chap is coming back like a circus turn. They'll go and meet him with a procession. They think he's going to raise the dead and get rid of the mice and rats; and he'll only have to hold out his hand to rake in the cash. . . . That's what you don't see, you folks."

Adèle had risen to her feet and looked at the cripple without answering, her features drawn with suppressed anger. Petit Louis, sitting with his chair tilted back, was signalling surreptitiously to Milot to hold his tongue. Étienne, to keep himself in countenance, was snipping at a cork.

"Well," said Milot. "I can see I am in the way. I had better be going. Good-night, everybody. No offence, Madame Adèle."

Then he went away with the charwoman, who had finished her work. The tap of his wooden leg was heard on the steps and died away in the distance.

"If he hadn't left his leg at the War I'd have given him a piece of my mind," muttered Adèle.

She looked anxiously at her nephew.

"I hope you don't think like that?"

"Don't you take any notice of what he says," answered Louis in his drawling guttersnipe's voice. "What puts his back up is to hear people say that Saint Magloire knows Africa better than anyone else. He wants to be the only one to have a right to talk about the Colonies. It's just the same with the War, no one has any business to talk about Verdun but him."

"He is a good chap at heart," the gardener declared. "Look here, to-morrow you had better dig up that square at the end; I am going to put in winter potatoes. And after that we'll have to look to the artichokes."

Adèle had gone to the window. The sky was dusky blue, growing transparent under the rising moon, and the light bathed all the garden, powdering the pathways and outlining the flower-beds. Only the park, where the firs were so closely crowded together that no light could filter through, remained dark. A little patch of night crouched under each clump of peonies and fringed the shrubs with shadow. White carnations seemed to be floating on the lawn, milky and smooth as a pool of mist.

Somewhere a cricket nibbled at the silence. A dog howled at the moon. The foliage rustled with hidden life: branches cracked, shivering. . . .

"The saint," cried Adèle in a stifled voice, stepping backwards.

The two men, startled, rose to their feet.

A dark shape had indeed appeared at the end of the kitchen garden, clearly outlined against the luminous night. The traveller, who had come through the fields, stopped and looked at the house; then, slowly, he lifted his hands to bless his sleeping hosts.

"Yes, it's he," murmured Etienne, recognising Magloire Dubourg by his great height.

All three, drawn together, gazed at him with beating

hearts. The saint moved on and the trees hid him from view.

"Someone ought to go and wake the master and mistress," continued the gardener in a strangled voice.

But no one moved: they stood as though they were rooted to the spot. The gravel crunched under a step. . . . Neither the men nor Adèle stirred. The maid waited, her limbs paralysed. Petit Louis looked ill at ease. At last an energetic hand turned the knob and pushed open the door, which shut again with a bang.

"Peace be with you," said the saint as he entered.

His broad shoulders filled the whole doorway. His head was bare; his broad pensive brow, which had been shielded from the sun by a helmet, was white as ivory, but the lower part of his face was sunburnt. A rough grey beard covered half his cheeks. His eyes, hidden in two pools of shadow, could not be seen.

"Father, Father!" stammered Adèle, on her knees.

Louis gazed at the scene, more pallid than ever; the gardener stood with his shoulders bent, his cap shaking in his hands.

Saint Magloire, stooping down, looked at the maid. He laid his hand on her shoulder, and that enormous hand seemed to have no weight.

"Do not weep," said the muffled voice. "Nothing can stand in the way of God's will, but prayer can drive away things of which man is afraid. We will both pray."

Only Adèle could understand the meaning of those words. Her head dropped to the window-sill, and she began to weep again, her thin back shaking with sobs.

The garden had grown dim, all the stars were suddenly blotted out. A dismal wind passed by, wailing, and mingled its plaint with the lament of the maid-servant, prostrate before the saint.

CHAPTER II

YOUNG Joséphin Pelé, having filled the holy water stoup and opened the side door of the church, went into the sacristy.

"Hallo, there's the duffer," said Milot as he caught sight of him.

On principle the doorkeeper of the Aubernon works detested all persons reputed to be rich, whether farmers, manufacturers, or people of property. But since the widow Pelé had reported him to his employers after she had caught him one evening drinking in their kitchen with some factory girls, he had transferred all his hatred to her; and as he could not pay out the mother, he did his best to persecute the son.

Joséphin, however, could not complain of having ever been threatened by Milot. The sacristan never spoke to him; he expressed what he had on his mind in asides, as though addressing an invisible audience, or meditating aloud. In the same way the old colonial would have thought himself disgraced if he had directly apostrophised the priest, for whom his employers obliged him to work outside his hours at the factory; he pretended to ignore his presence, and seemed to conduct the only conversation he ever had with Abbé Choisy through the medium of his wooden leg, at which he stared hard as he talked.

"As if 'it' wouldn't be better employed at school studying medicine, for instance, so as to be useful to other people, instead of snuffing candles from morning till night," he mumbled, turning his back on Joséphin. "And it thinks it can show off! But in the army it will just be good for emptying pails—the poor idiot!"

Joséphin hypocritically pretended not to hear.

He had a wide, thick-lipped mouth which was always smiling, and when anyone looked him in the face, he giggled foolishly, blushing abruptly to the tips of his ears. He wore, even at week-day services, a beautiful red cassock, of which the other choir-boys were jealous. His mother, by means of clamouring, recrimination, intrigues and prayers, had contrived to have her son better dressed than the others. Young Pelé, who was entrusted with delicate tasks, began to fill the sacred vessels, his yellow brows puckered.

"Go and ring the second bell, Joséphin," said the priest as he came in. "We are late"

The good man was breathless, for the road up to the church was steep. Perceiving the censer, he took it in his hand, blew noisily on it, then rubbed it with his sleeve, thus intimating to the sacristan that the utensils of the Church, were not carefully tended. But Milot, who had something to say, was contemplating the glossy tip of his wooden leg.

"There will surely be a rare fuss in Barlincourt," he began to tell his leg, "when people know that Magloire Dubourg arrived last night at his brother's."

Father Choisy started.

"What did you say?" he exclaimed, "the saint"—then correcting himself at once—"M. Dubourg's brother in Barlincourt? Are you certain?"

The cripple, being questioned, deigned to reply directly.

"I have seen him," he asserted. "Only I did not speak to him because I have my own ideas."

And bending his head again, he started talking politics to his right shoe. But the priest, distracted, was no longer listening.

"What a business, dear me, what a business!" he stammered, as he slipped on his alb. "It is a great event, all Christendom will be talking of it. And I have had no instructions, the

Bishop has told me nothing. . . . After all, if he is a saint, I owe him attention, an official welcome which about which, after all, I haven't a notion! But he cannot be quite a saint, his name is not among the martyrs, he is not even dead. . . . That being so, if I do things too well, I risk displeasing the Bishop. What a terrible alternative!"

Two callow choristers listened open-mouthed to his incoherencies. Joséphin, who had finished ringing the bell, laughed nervously, gobbling like a turkey-cock.

"Shall I go and tell mother?" he ventured, "she would surely know, she. . . ."

The mere idea of a possible intervention by Madame Pelé gave a shock to his Reverence, who dreaded that pious lady above everybody and everything.

"Ah! no, indeed," he protested. "Be quiet, I shall manage, I will look. . . ."

And he turned hither and thither, tormented with uncertainty, passing distractedly from the sacristy to the choir, while Milot, who was pretending to clean the floor, said to his broom:

"They had better not ask me to sing the *Sanctus* and the *Agnus Dei*, I flatly refuse. I am a sacristan, not a chorister. . . . That wasn't in the bargain; one man one job. . . ."

Joséphin, disobeying the priest, had escaped from the sacristy to go and meet his mother. It was his only joy to show himself in the street in his red cassock and white surplice; and had it not been for the objections of a socialist councillor who had forced the Mayor to interfere, young Pelé would have been seen walking about all day dressed for High Mass, even venturing on the market-place, where the urchins from the secular schools used to pelt him with cabbage stumps.

"Mamma, mamma!" he squeaked as soon as he caught sight of Madame Pelé's black gown, "there

is a saint come to Barlincourt, M. Dubourg's brother."

The widow was a woman of about fifty, thin, yellow, and seamed with wrinkles; her hair, which she carefully hid under her jet bonnet as though it were a sin to show it, was still very black.

"Hold your tongue," she said sharply to her son, who stood in terror of her, "I knew all that long before you did."

And with the simpleton at her side she hastened towards the church, her hands folded on her prayer-book.

"Well, Father," she said with an air of decision, as she pushed her way into the sacristy, "what are we going to do?"

She always said "we" when talking of the ministrations of Abbé Choisy; and when anyone died in Barlincourt, she would say quite naturally: "We took him the last Sacraments." But the priest who, weary of opposing her, allowed her to do as she liked in the parish at ordinary times, was in no mood to listen to her advice.

He turned a furious look upon her, as if she had proposed something disgraceful.

"Madame Pelé," he said with pursed lips, "I have begged you over and over again not to invade the sacristy during the services; I must renew my request. As to the—distinguished person to whom you are alluding, he may not actually be a saint, but he is certainly a holy man, and that is more than enough to guide my conduct. . . . I shall see you later, Madame."

The widow, amazed at this reception, retired with profound annoyance, her indignation being all the greater because Milot was standing in a corner, contemplating his stump with a vindictive smile.

"Not bad for a priest," murmured the sacristan.

And he dexterously pushed his broom against the legs of Joséphin, who was passing by to fetch the Missal.

In the church porch and in the aisles women were chattering excitedly. Usually not more than five or six were present; to-day there were nearly twenty. They had hurried to the church dressed as the news had found them, in their house-jackets and old shoes. No sooner did they catch sight of Baptistine Pelé than they surrounded her eagerly.

"Well, is it true what they are saying?"

The widow, realising her importance, signified "yes" by simply closing her eyes. Then, in a whisper:

"We are waiting for him to come before we begin. . . ."

Caps close together, the worshippers chattered in hushed tones:

"Did you ever! . . . To behold a saint in the flesh! Madame Aubernon was saying he might well be Pope some day. . . . What does his Reverence say? . . . Shan't we have a procession?"

In the sacristy Abbé Choisy was growing impatient, his heart thumping with emotion. Ought he to begin Mass without waiting for Saint Magloire? After all, perhaps he was not coming. . . . Should he send one of the children to tell him? That seemed a queer step to take. . . . Should he go himself? That might be too presumptuous.

"All the same, it is already twenty past eight," Milot observed to a golden chasuble which he was putting away.

"Well, children," said the priest as he put on his maniple, "it is time."

Preceded by his two servers, he entered the choir with eyes cast down, genuflected, then crossed himself, facing the nave. No, the saint had not yet arrived.

He began, "Introibo ad altare Dei,"

"Ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam," responded Joséphin in his squeaky voice.

Alone in the poultry yard, surrounded by daring rabbits which even climbed on to his knees, Magloire

Dubourg, seated on a bundle of wood, appeared to be dreaming. The sun caressed his face. Only his lips seemed to be alive, moving imperceptibly, as if stirred by the breath of a prayer. . . .

Since the morning there had been continuous activity around the King's Domain. About fifty inquisitive people were grouped before the villa, and the good wives, between their errands, came to ask for news, inquiring "if anyone had seen him."

The Paris papers had just arrived, and were full of Saint Magloire, whose retreat was not yet known; and the men were arguing as they waved the newspapers.

Some of the workmen had stayed away from the factory; farmers were lingering on their way from the fields, all the old gentlemen of leisure had come to a standstill near the villa, and the tradespeople who made their deliveries from door to door had ranged their carts along the pavement. They were waiting.

Some urchins clung to the railings, others sat astride the garden wall, and kept watch.

"Come on—here he is!" they had shouted a dozen times.

At once there was a rush forward, but hitherto nothing had been seen but Étienne, with his spade over his shoulder, or the apron of Adèle as she passed between the shrubs.

They had learnt, however, from Petit Louis, whose room was in the mediæval lodge, that the Saint had not left the house. The Dubourg's under-gardener was not popular among the neighbours, but for once they had all been trying to be friendly to him, and the workman Mathieu had offered him tobacco for a cigarette.

Absurd and incredible stories were being circulated and promptly carried by the housewives to the market-place. For instance, little Debièvre declared

that he had seen the saint on the terrace, wearing a white robe, with a lamb behind him; and old Moucron, to whom he turned for confirmation, dared not say yes or no. "To be sure, he did think he had seen something too. . . ."

The Mayor himself, M. Quatrepomme, a tall thin man in an alpaca jacket, took the trouble to come along. He was at once surrounded.

"Well, M. Quatrepomme, here's news!"

"Have you come to make a speech to him?"

The perplexed magistrate rubbed his badly-shaved chin the wrong way.

"I was just passing by," he lied. "I am going down to the school about the cistern. I have to look after the affairs of the town, you know, and nothing else. . . ."

He bravely resisted the temptation even to glance through the railings, and went off with his hands behind his back, wondering whether he ought to be proud of what was happening in his borough, or uneasy about the disturbance it was certain to produce.

M. Dubourg, from his window, had noticed the unusual throng and had experienced a childish satisfaction. He had already rung up the *Jour* and the *Dernière Heure* to notify them of Saint Magloire's arrival; and he was expecting numerous visitors in the afternoon.

On ordinary days he was accustomed to write all the morning, and to come down to table at the last minute, very untidy, with a shooting jacket unbuttoned over his night-shirt; but to-day, in his brother's honour, he had dressed himself properly. He made a great effort to preserve a calm demeanour, but every gesture betrayed his restlessness, and it was useless for him to stroll about whistling or to look at the weather casually, or to wander from the terrace into the drawing room and back again.

On the previous evening he had spent quite an hour chatting with his brother, and he had fully expected

to carry on the conversation in the morning—they had so much to say to each other—but the saint did not appear.

When the maid had come to do his room, she found the work already done, the room swept and the bed made. The visitor from Africa with a smile had told her that he was used to doing his own housework. Afterwards, he had taken a turn in the kitchen garden, had talked for a moment with Étienne, and then had gone back to his room, so deeply absorbed that he appeared not to see his sister-in-law smiling at him from the terrace.

The children were filled with joy. Yvonne had run to tell the great news to the Aubernons. As she saw the impression it made on them, she realised for the first time the meaning of pride. She came home on wings. Gérard, who had gone to meet her, breathed triumph; his head was bare and the hair on his brow waved like the young wings of a Hermes. The young people smiled in silence at each other, overflowing with happiness.

They were in the dining-room quite half an hour before lunch, Gérard wearing a tie and a buttoned-up coat, Yvonne with her hair drawn tidily back, and a white chemisette muffling her up to the chin.

The modest appearance of Mme. Dubourg's table had not been achieved without much effort: only one glass for each person, one jug of water, one decanter of wine, sardines in a glass dish. It looked like a boarding-house.

"That will do," declared M. Dubourg after a final inspection.

When the saint appeared, the two young people stiffened to attention, and while he recited the *Benedicite*, they stood with bent heads like the peasants of the *Angelus*.

The beginning of the meal was gloomy. No one was brave enough to start a conversation. Everything that came into their heads appeared futile and

insignificant; it seemed unsuitable to entertain the Saint with such idle chatter.

They remained dumb, passing the dishes by; the food choked them. Magloire, on the other hand, ate with a healthy appetite, cutting his bread into little squares like a peasant. He drank nothing but water.

The Dubourgs could not take their eyes off him. Without admitting it, they were expecting some transubstantiation, or some miraculous apparition; but nothing happened. Marie-Louise noticed that her brother-in-law wore no cuffs, and that the buttons of his velvet jacket did not match.

Gérard would have liked to shout his enthusiasm and joy aloud.

"Shall I tell him I want to become a nun?" Yvonne was wondering, her excited little heart beating too fast. But then she thought of George Aubernon and blushed rosy red, convinced that the Saint at a single glance could read the truth in her face.

Adèle waited at table, making frequent mistakes, her legs almost giving way in her emotion. In spite of angry glances from Mme. Dubourg, the maid was unable to take her eyes off the saint.

But the traveller noticed nothing; he ate without haste, absent-mindedly. The silence dragged on, became embarrassing. At last, to show his family that he was not perturbed, the novelist began a conversation. He questioned his brother about his voyage.

"Only a week," the saint answered. "Besides, I spent the whole of it in my cabin; for the only time I went on deck I was surrounded, tormented with questions, and photographed as if I were an important personage."

"But you are," Mme. Dubourg interrupted clumsily.

The saint, without replying, shook his head in denial.

Then, after a moment's pause, pursuing his own reflections, he went on in a very gentle voice :

"Everything surprises me here. It seems to me that I have found my old life again, just as it used to be. It is all familiar to me : the words I hear, the faces I see around me, the trees, everything. . . . It is so pleasant that I almost blame myself; I feel remorseful."

"Remorseful!" exclaimed M. Dubourg. "After forty years of wandering, it seems to me you have earned the right to a little rest."

The saint once more shook his white head.

"He who has not yet given all has done nothing," said he. "To devote oneself to a mission, one should have no ties. To love one's mother, to be fond of one's home, is a greater danger than to be in chains, for no one can deliver you. . . . Our dear mother was my first sacrifice. Believe me, it cost me a great deal. . . . I have often followed in thought the road lined with elms that leads to the cemetery where she lies at rest."

Mme. Dubourg and her husband looked at each other. The memory of the mysterious raven of Ambérieu flashed through their minds; but neither ventured to allude to it.

The Evangelist was soon immersed again in his thoughtful silence, but they felt that he was making an effort to emerge from it. From time to time he raised his head and smiled at them, then he talked gaily to set them at ease. He told tales about his credulous negroes and about the agricultural colony of Libreville, which he and the Fathers had founded. Gérard pictured him in a landscape à la Gauguin, negresses with bright coloured cottons wound about their waists, squatting at his feet.

"Well, do you intend to stay in France?" asked M. Dubourg, growing bolder.

"For some time, yes," answered the Evangelist, his face again becoming very serious. He, however, did not go on to tell them what he had come to do.

During the meal the crowd outside the railings had

continued to increase. The whole of Barlincourt was there; people had even come from the country round. The polished bars of countless bicycles shone along the wall.

From time to time a friend of the Dubourgs entered the garden, mistrustfully received by Étienne, while the crowd of idlers poured forth witticisms.

"That's right, go and ask the saint to make you straight again," cried a wag as old Moucron went in.

When the Dubourgs rose from the table, there were already about twenty people in the garden. This seemed to annoy the saint.

"You have visitors, I see. I will leave you," he said to his brother.

But the novelist held him back, almost beseechingly.

Among the visitors were some people whom he had to be careful not to offend. He whispered their names to his brother, pointing them out one after the other with a little jerk of his head.

"The schoolmistress, very nice. . . . The fat, bald man in the black coat is Aubernon, the biggest manufacturer in the district. Very rich. . . . He began as a working man. It is likely that some day he will ask me for Yvonne's hand for his son, that tall, fair youth who is standing behind him. . . . They made their money in the war, you know; the marriage would give them a step up. . . . Hallo! here is the editor of the '*Français*, the paper that is publishing my novel; I simply must introduce you. When you wanted money for your Lobaye people during the year of the famine, he sent five thousand francs."

Magloire Dubourg came down eventually to the terrace and went among the guests, who, uncertain what attitude to adopt, bowed as he passed by as though before a procession. These exaggerated tokens of respect still further increased his dissatisfaction and confusion. Much embarrassed, he went and sat down

on the kerb of the well, his hands thrust into the pockets of his velvet coat. He might have been taken for a rustic sportsman.

"An eccentric," the editor of the *Français* decided at the first glance.

Yvonne, beaming with joy, was running to and fro, scattering handshakes and smiles. As she greeted Georges Aubernon she turned away her eyes and blushed bashfully.

The garden was filled with spring. The foliage of the trees was a fresh young green, and in the branches chaffinches were gaily singing. The women in their light frocks gave the gathering the air of a garden party. The Evangelist, motionless, watched the scene sadly. People stared at him as much as they could, glad to be allowed to come so close. The most daring began to question him.

"We have often spoken about you in my paper," said the editor. "You must have read. . . ."

He almost expected the old man to thank him. . . . The schoolmistress, who was accustomed to think of the Earth in terms of a map in two hemispheres, asked in a shy voice how many times he had been round it. She had brought her two best pupils with her by way of a reward; and the two youngsters, not daring to move in their starched frocks, gazed wide-eyed at the saint. M. Aubernon in due time slipped into the front row.

He had a coarse, flabby grey face, which looked as if it had been moulded with dirty fingers. He talked to the saint about the Catholic foundation which he had just presented to Barlincourt, the dispensary which his wife conducted, and all the good that his money enabled him to do. He seemed to apologise for his fortune and at the same time to be proud of it. Old Moucron, a big broken-down peasant, ill-treated by his son as he in his day had ill-treated his father, made a bow every time his eye met the glance of the Evangelist; and as he straightened himself, he

put his hand to his back with a groan, as though he hoped that the saint, in pity, would cure him on the spot. Madame Dubourg, seated in the centre of a group, was giving information to the ladies leaning over her.

François Dubourg thought his brother was too reserved. He might, he felt, have been more credit to him if, instead of merely lending his presence, he had told stories, original anecdotes about Samory or the latest troubles in the Kong country. But with the advent of more guests, the depression of the saint only increased.

Suddenly his face relaxed; he had just perceived Abbé Choisy, who was coming forward awkwardly, not knowing how to introduce himself. The Evangelist went to meet him, and greeted him so affectionately that the priest, in confusion, forgot the little speech he had prepared. Father Choisy would gladly have withdrawn, having done his duty and gratified his curiosity, but Magloire Dubourg dragged him away towards the kitchen garden.

No sooner had they passed through the door than the guests visibly became more cheerful. Conversation was resumed, everyone talked at once; there were little bursts of laughter. Impressions were exchanged and M. and Mme. Dubourg were surrounded and congratulated.

"They really know some very nice people," said Mme. Aubernon to her son. "You see, there is Madame de Choiseul just arriving with her companion. She is a countess, you know. . . . It seems a member of the Academy is also expected. . . ."

Mme. Pelé had arrived with Abbé Choisy; the poor man could not get rid of her. She was in the habit of giving large sums to Church funds, she was president of all the religious societies in the parish, and replaced broken windows, worn-out surplices and prie-dieu. Moreover, the Bishop, in the course of a pastoral visitation, had called her from the pulpit "our dear benefactress," so that it was impossible not to treat

her with the greatest consideration; but she made the priest pay heavily for her liberality. It was she who ruled the church, lording it over the devotees and the choir boys. Being inordinately suspicious, she had had the pockets of their cassocks sewn up, to prevent the youngsters from taking the coppers out of the offertory; she measured the wine and counted the bits of charcoal for the censer. At Mass she sang at the top of her voice, putting everyone else out of tune; and, after the service every Sunday, with lowered eyes, elbows pressed against her body, prim smile, and an air of walking on eggs, she gave lessons in deportment to the young girls of the "Catechism of Perseverance."

Nothing could be more full of pride than the modesty of this woman. She stood in the midst of a group of guests with her hands folded on her stomach and an affected simper, and she talked in a sibilant whisper, as though she were at confession. At times she laughed, but it was an insincere little laugh which she concealed behind tight closed lips, correcting its impropriety by keeping her eyes bent prudishly on the ground.

"Yes," she explained affectedly, "I have called a meeting for six o'clock of the ladies of the Congregation of the Holy Rosary, to give thanks to the Lord for having sent us this holy man. The young girls of the Congregation of the Blessed Virgin are to come too. . . ."

One by one the guests slipped away from her. Soon no one was left to listen but Mme. Aubernon, who did not dare to escape.

"With all these good works," Mme. Pelé explained with a sigh, "one does not stay at home as much as one would like; but so long as one has enough time to look after the maid and say one's prayers nothing else matters. My new girl gives me a lot of trouble all the same; she is a girl of no class, brought up by the Assistance Publique. . . ."

Glancing round to make sure that no one could overhear her, she added, lowering her voice :

"Like Louis, that nephew of Adèle's whom they have taken on here. Is it wise? Well, to come back to my maid, I have decided to bring her back to the Lord. I make her say her prayers morning and evening, and recite a dozen rosaries in the afternoon as well. She observed the whole of Lent with us and I have forbidden her to go to the cinema. . . ."

The neighbours were taking leave. Old Moucron and the workman Mathieu had gone off quarrelling; the schoolmistress had taken her pupils home. When everyone except friends had gone, Yvonne served tea; then she came back and sat down by Georges, at whom she looked with frank joy.

Time, however, went by and the saint did not reappear. They questioned Etienne, who was returning from the kitchen garden, and he answered :

"They are still talking together, his Reverence seems to be struck all of a heap."

There was still the same crowd in the avenue, for the loafers had not yet had a chance to see anything. Several of them followed Mathieu and Moucron to the Café Dumarchey to get some details.

"They will drink more to-day than they'll work," grumbled the hostess, who disliked the factory hands.

As Milot entered, a large grey motor car slowed down before the bar.

"Heigh ;" called out one of the passengers, "where is the Villa Dubourg, please?"

"The house of the saint," added another.

The cripple looked at them disagreeably, and pointed the way with a vague nod.

"Farther on. . . ."

The car leapt forward and the beadle shrugged his shoulders :

"There you are, the pilgrimage is beginning. Count your coppers. . . . Get 'em ready, slow music. . . ."

It was the beginning of the journalistic invasion. Other reporters at the same time were arriving by train.

François Dubourg, who was expecting them, welcomed them with open arms. The best reporters in Paris had taken the trouble to come down, even the great men who never exerted themselves except on big occasions—among them Jacques de Nointel, a pot-bellied giant, and a great specialist in religious questions, who only a week earlier had interviewed the Pope.

The novelist, who knew him, paid him especial attention.

"I'll tell my brother. . . . He does not care for company at all, you know, he is rather taciturn."

The guests of the Dubourgs gazed curiously at these men, whose signatures they saw every morning in the newspapers.

Little Pedro was there, who had been in every war, in every revolution, every catastrophe, and whom the Bolsheviks had nearly shot at Moscow. Hardy, a former photographer, turned journalist, who seemed to know nothing and yet understood everything, was also present; and Princet who poured into the articles that he scribbled in trains and hotel bedrooms more emotion, imagination and wit than a novelist can get into ten volumes. Among others were old Bellières, who owed all his notoriety to the fact that he had been present at ninety-one executions, among which were three hangings—and Bernheim, the editor of the "Boulevard," correct to the point of affectation, who could not interview people more than once, since he delighted in tearing them to pieces with little biting phrases, his merciless eyes discovering at a glance the very things his victim was trying hardest to hide; and also Cassini, deaf as a post, blind as a bat, garrulous and irrepressible, who by some miracle contrived after all to make sense out of his notes. All these were men who had to discuss metallurgy one day and

foreign politics the next; to wax emotional at one moment over a fire-damp explosion, and at another to pour abuse upon a bankrupt. And to deal with all this on the instant, without a second to collect their thoughts, without documents, punctuating their text with telegraphic "stops"—to be judged a few hours later by half a million readers, a large number of whom understood these questions far better than they did.

Behind them, almost apart, stood two beginners, one none too well groomed. On the terrace the photographers were setting up their cameras.

"Born at Ambérieu in 1866, wasn't he?" inquired Pedro without waiting.

Fountain pens and pencils made their appearance. The journalists were writing. Each had brought a ready-made opinion to Barlincourt, some prepared to admire, others to reserve their judgment. Jacques de Nointel, who had a greater reputation to live up to than the others, had carefully prepared his interview, as if he had been entrusted with the canonisation of the saint. He had met at the Vatican a Father from the African Missions of Lyons, who was a great admirer of Magloire Dubourg, and had heard from him some startling anecdotes out of which he hoped to make a unique story. Bernheim, suddenly watchful, had noticed that François Dubourg, usually so noisy and jovial, was now rubbing his hands like a bishop on the stage. The journalist had followed Adèle to the kitchen to hear the story of the Saint's arrival. By this time the photographers were going round the drawing room, wondering whether they would be able to take an interior without a flash-light, and, promptly making themselves at home, they began to remove the plants which interfered with the light, while one of them, by dint of pulling at the ropes of the double curtains succeeded in breaking them.

"Here comes my brother," said the novelist, running in from the garden.

The journalists grouped themselves on the terrace.

The saint was approaching slowly. He was bare-headed and wore a priest's cape thrown over his shoulders (a Lazarist at Marseilles had given it him because his coat had disappeared with his luggage), and he was looking at the new-comers with anger and surprise. A cinema operator, leaning against the well, began to turn his crank.

"Not so fast, if you please," he cried to the Evangelist. . . . "Stop one moment. . . . Head this way. . . ."

The photographers, hugging their heavy cameras, were taking snap-shots, clicking against time.

"He is making a careful entry," scoffed Bernheim, in an undertone.

Indeed, the appearance of this queerly dressed old man in the midst of guests drawn up in line, with the big dog growling at his heels, had about it something stagey and artificial.

M. François Dubourg was pushing his brother before him.

"You can at least say a few words to them," he whispered in his ear. "Do it for my sake."

As soon as he got into the drawing room, the journalists crowded round him. Their staring eyes—like cameras—focused him. All the faces were serious now: before that glance none would have dared to smile. The eyes of the saint were blue-grey, surprisingly pale; their gleam of fervour, their serene flame, dominated the emaciated countenance. The lids were wasted by sun, or fever, or tears. Little Pedro was reminded of the inspired eyes of his Russian nihilists. Nointel thought of Leo XIII. As for the badly dressed beginner, who was standing at the back to hide his shoes, he simply concluded:

"The man drinks."

Hardy, the reporter-photographer, employing his favourite method, which he called "Knocking the wind out of people," asked unceremoniously, "Why do they call you the saint?"

The traveller, probably shocked by such a question, stared at him.

The others, full of curiosity, waited :

"Why? I do not know in the least, sir. Maybe in mockery," he answered in his deep veiled voice, "I never desired such a title, and it distresses me when people apply it to me. I am only a man who is devoted to his faith and nothing more. . . ."

Pedro intervened :

"We apologise for coming in this way to disturb you in your retreat, when you must need rest so badly; but the public loves you and it wants to be told about you, and that must excuse our indiscretion. Now, can you tell us what is the object of your return to France, and if you mean to stay here? Have you given up your mission in Africa?"

The Evangelist, provoked by these questions, shook his head, and remained silent.

"I beg of you," he answered after a moment, "not to question me. Later on, I shall probably have need of you, but not now. I don't want people to bother about me. There are others who are far more worthy of your attention. Look here, I came back from Africa with the Reverend Father Meunier of the Lazarists. You had much better go to him; he is a very learned man, who will be able to tell you much more interesting things than I can."

"No," Nointel, who was experienced in making Churchmen talk, artfully protested, "if only in the interests of religion you ought to keep in touch with the public. You are popular—and with good reason—and certain words coming from you would be listened to, whereas coming from others they would carry no weight."

But Saint Magloire did not give in :

"No really, your insistence is torture to me. Not now. Later. . . ."

The little badly-dressed reporter, who had been silent till then, suddenly summoned up courage :

"All the same," he insisted in his lisping voice, "you would do us a jolly good turn if you would tell us something about your plans, so that we don't go back empty-handed. . . . Ask my colleagues whether that isn't so. I am not speaking for those who are paid by the month, but for us penny-a-liners."

Nointel had put up his eye-glass and haughtily scanned this humble comrade. All the others looked a little sheepish. Yet this naïve argument appealed to the saint.

"Ah! really," he murmured, "that might be doing you a service. . . ."

For a few moments he remained lost in thought, as if still hesitating, then he made up his mind. He lifted his head and asked quietly :

"Why do you never mention God in your articles?"

Taken aback by this absurd question, they looked in astonishment at the saint and at one another.

"What does he say? What does he say?" spluttered Cassini, loath to believe the testimony of his deaf ears.

Bernheim bit his thin lips.

"Yes," he jested under his breath, "a nice little topic for the news columns of the *Boulevard*!"

The saint noticed their surprise.

"That seems strange to you, doesn't it?" he continued in a harsh voice. "But tell me, why do you suppose I came to Europe, if not to speak of Him? Did you believe that after forty years spent in Africa, scorched by fever, with my limbs scarred by wounds, having redeemed thousands of souls through my efforts and sometimes at the cost of blood, I should suddenly have abandoned everything, forsaken the source of my purest joys, run away from my task—in a word, deserted—to come over here and end my days in peace like a retired shop-keeper? You despised me in your hearts even while you showered undeserved praise upon me. My task is not ended: it has only begun. You inquired just now about the object of my journey. Here it is: to save the world."

This sudden attack startled them. However, they quickly regained their composure and seized on his words, jotting down notes for reference on their pads.

"So then," said Princet, who was the first to stop writing, "you intend to carry on your mission in France? To undertake Catholic Propaganda?"

The saint shook his head.

"No, I have come to dictate God's law to men. This society, built on selfishness and hatred, has lived too long. God wishes to re-enter His kingdom. I have been told to come and preach goodwill; I have come."

The journalists looked at him questioningly; they did not yet understand.

"But who told you this?" Pedro asked timidly.

Magloire Dubourg gazed fixedly at him and made no reply.

They felt disquieted. None dared take up the question. They all realised Who was the supreme Master from Whom the order had come, and a sudden constraint held them back from mockery. They waited, overcome.

"You were surprised, were you not, when I asked you why you never spoke of God? But have you never thought that He alone can save this world which wallowed in blood through five years of war and has now arisen staggering . . .?"

He spoke with an ardour which drove his words home, and his commanding glance seemed to rivet them into the minds of the journalists.

"They ought to be cried from the house-tops, the sublime words of Christ: 'Love one another.' It is those words which will prevent the final catastrophe when everything crumbles away. Look about you, open your eyes, open your hearts. Can this cruel and stupid society go on living, perpetually setting the blind selfishness of some against the base envy of others? Can this abject duel of appetites and desires last any longer? . . . What are your human laws

built on? Tell me that. On fear! That is the ruler of your civilised world. Fear! You condemn the murderer because you fear for your life; you condemn the thief for fear of your goods; you only spare others for fear of what they may one day do to you. . . . But [of true justice, of goodwill, there is no trace. . . . It is always the horrible law of vengeance which governs both men and nations. The law which has produced nothing but misery and death, which has exhausted the conquerors and bruised the conquered. . . .”

The journalists were taking notes, feverishly, as they would have done for a Ministerial oration or a brilliant speech in Court. The saint, as his enthusiasm burned brighter, began to speak more rapidly; and they seized his words on the wing, without taking time even to understand them.

“No wave of barbarism must be allowed to sweep away all that human genius has taken so many centuries to build up. Humanity must not sink back into the primal mire and, weighed down with mud, take up again its slow ascent towards a happiness it never attains. Christ is here, quite close: let us hold out our arms to Him. It is in His Name that I have come to cry: ‘Love one another!’ and I will reveal hidden truths that will unseal the eyes of the blindest and bring about the reign of universal love on earth.”

They raised their heads, their eyes full of questions. The last words had struck them all. What secret truths was he going to disclose to them? Did the wanderer really believe himself to be a messenger of God? The less hardened among them were strangely disturbed; with beating hearts they awaited the revelation. But the Evangelist was silent.

“That is, of course . . . religious truths . . . Divine truths which you intend to reveal?” Pedro ventured to ask.

The Evangelist did not answer. Jacques de Nointel urged him:—“Only the press could make them known

to the whole world at once. . . . That is what we have come for and we fully realise the importance of our mission. . . ."

The others, who were eager for information, assented. Bernheim alone was again smiling his sceptic's smile. The traveller shook his head.

"No, I cannot say anything at present. It was just because I wanted to avoid any premature declarations that I did not wish to see you. I am only a humble son of the Church, and it is my duty before speaking to confer with some of its heads. Then I will willingly answer you, but not before."

The journalists were disappointed. Without this climax their articles would fall flat. Their self-possession began to come back.

"I say, he is not encouraging, this prophet of yours," Bernheim whispered to Nointel; "he's a regular Jeremiah."

But the interviewer of Cardinals would not acknowledge himself defeated. After glancing through his notes, he asked cunningly :

"Do you intend to advocate any important social reforms?"

Magloire Dubourg looked at Nointel, discerning the trap that was set for him.

"To hate nothing and to envy nothing," he answered simply, "such will be the new law by which the world will live. Men will no longer feel envy when they understand that each in turn will have his chance; they will no longer hate one another when they know that each is alone responsible for his own happiness."

They guessed that these words held a hidden meaning, which they would have been glad to understand.

"You mean happiness hereafter?" queried Nointel.

Again the saint made no reply.

"In short," said Bernheim disdainfully, "you subordinate everything to faith in God?"

"Everything," replied the saint emphatically, and

his glance forced the other man to lower his eyes. "If men refuse to believe in Him, let them slaughter each other like animals; it will only be a preparation for the Divine chastisement that will follow. If you do not believe that you possess an immortal soul, kill, loot, disgrace yourselves: you have at least as much right to do these things as hogs and wild beasts. What is it that constrains you to be kind to your fellow-men? Is it only because you all express yourselves by the same kind of grunts? that all your snouts are alike and that you all walk on two legs? If you deny the soul, what law forces you to respect the human beast more than any other?"

A vague gesture expressed Bernheim's scepticism.

"Oh!" said he, "the soul, the soul. . . ."

"Yes, the soul," the saint replied fiercely, brandishing the word like a torch. "It is because it has despised its soul that your unbelieving world is sinking into the mud. If man would but listen to his soul and believe in God, the rich would not be oppressing the poor, and the poor would not be dreaming of bloody retaliation; we should not see the strong nations enslaving the weaker, peoples and individuals dreaming of nothing but plunder. But if they are not afraid of a judge, if they believe that after a single life on earth they return into the void, they are right to indulge in a surfeit of pleasures, to demand unrestrained enjoyment, and the poor are only senseless dupes not to snatch happiness even at the cost of murder. . . . There is no more faith, you say. Well, then, make way for the animal instincts, let loose desire, and allow the mob to overthrow its masters and gorge itself in its turn."

Princet was the only one who was not writing. He was gazing at the saint, trying to see into his mind, while the others were taking down his words.

"But," he protested, "the most Christian countries have no more sense of equity than the others, and social injustice was just as bad in the days when

France called herself the Eldest Daughter of the Church."

"It is not enough to hang crucifixes on the walls of the law courts, you must have Christ in your hearts," replied the Evangelist.

The shabby beginner, quite disheartened, had collapsed on to a sofa.

"It's no use, I cannot follow this," he said, as he put his pencil away. "I cannot understand a word. . . ."

And, turning to his colleague, he added:

"You'll lend me your notes, won't you?"

The saint, as he talked, was looking at them with a luminous and piercing glance that hurt them.

"Mind has killed the soul," he went on. "They are like two scorpions, one of which will have to devour the other. . . . You no longer believe in God, but you believe in something worse, in nothingness. You are freethinkers, and you smile at the idea of a Creator Who has always existed and will live for ever, but you believe in a limitless universe where thousands of heavens spread out into the infinite, with no boundary in space to confine this soaring edifice that has neither foundation nor coping-stone. . . . You may invent elaborate systems, explore the history of man and always find some still lower being from whom to trace his descent, an animal, a molecule, an embryo; yet each hypothesis brings you to a fresh enigma. There always comes a moment when you can explain nothing more, when all is dark and doubtful. . . . It is there that God is waiting for you, you will always encounter Him at the end of each speculation. If you refuse to believe in Him, you must live in impenetrable darkness, in the heart of a mysterious world that admits of no explanation, beneath whose shifting surface your science cannot reach. . . ."

Hardy, too, with an impatient shrug of his shoulders, had ceased to take notes.

"There you are. Now he's started on philosophy," he grumbled. "How on earth can I send in an article on the existence of God?"

Old Bellières agreed under his breath :

"He had much better tell us about his crucifixion. . . . Upon my word, I've never seen one. . . ."

The Evangelist's heart filled with pity for their blindness.

"Why must your heads be so full and your hearts so empty?" he continued. "Listen. . . . I knew a black chief in Nenoue, whose sons had all been killed in battle and he had suffered very deeply from their loss. The memory of his dead children never left him; for years it tortured him. Then, to prevent himself from thinking about it, he added to his suite two slaves whose duty it was throughout his waking hours to beat drums, rattle baskets of shells and emit discordant howls whenever they saw their master lost in thought. He imagined the noise would drive away the evil spirit. . . . Well, you are all like that superstitious negro. In order to drive out of your minds the terrible enigma of the Beginning and the End, to avoid thinking about the Hereafter, you stupefy yourselves with words, you build up theories, you stuff phrases and formulas into every crack through which a doubt might enter. . . . You flourish your poor ideas like a baby's rattle so that you may try to drown the frightened voice of your souls which reminds you that God is waiting. But sorrow is still in the heart of the King—like the fear in your souls—however loud the two slaves beat their hands together and strike their tambourines. Noise may stun, it cannot restore confidence."

There was complete silence. The saint's impassioned voice had penetrated deeper than their minds and at last had reached their hearts.

"Noise may stun, it cannot restore confidence," repeated Pedro, abbreviating the words as he wrote them down. . . . "That's very good. . . ."

The others who were two sentences behind were scribbling hastily. Bernheim, the only one using shorthand, had already raised his head.

"It is true, people go less and less to church," he said, nodding his head as though the admission really distressed him. "In proportion as science progresses, religion loses its authority!"

"Which religion?" growled Nointel, who did not like the Jew. "Not his in any case!"

"Only old women go to church nowadays," went on Bernheim. "Modern children are brought up without any belief. . . . Well, then"—suddenly launching his treacherous question—"will these unlucky youngsters be held responsible for their lack of religion? Will God condemn them?"

The Evangelist looked at this crafty man.

"Ask the priests that," he answered; "I always seek advice from them in matters that I don't understand."

This evasion put Bernheim off the track, but his keen mind soon recovered it.

"By the way, how is it that with faith and tastes like yours you did not enter the priesthood?"

"I don't know," replied Magloire Dubourg, still on his guard. "If God had found me worthy, He would have sent me the inspiration. . . ."

Now that his exaltation had died down, the Evangelist was giving his answers in a weary voice. He made no reply at all to the next question.

"No, really, gentlemen, I have nothing else to tell you. . . ."

The journalists were still hoping that he would revert to the mysterious revelations he had foreshadowed, but the Evangelist clearly did not want to talk any more. He was exhausted.

Behind him, the window flamed in the setting sun, and the outline of his tall figure stood out against the light, as on stained glass. In the centre of his open palms the scars of the nails glowed like two rosy stains.

"Our dear colleague, François Dubourg, must be very happy to have you back at last," Jacques de Nointel said cordially as he took his leave. "You bring happiness."

"Happiness," repeated the Saint absently. "Who knows. . . . I feel so sad that it seems to me as if Death had entered here with me. . . ."

And from the top step of the terrace he watched them go.

CHAPTER III

"BARLINCOURT, where's that?"

"Two hours by train, so the *Français* says. He arrived there the other night."

"Let's have a look at his picture."

The housewives, who had foregathered in the dairy, leaned over the open paper and looked, thrilled and curious, at the photograph. Even the shopwoman stopped serving her customers, and set down her measure on the white marble; all listened to the reader.

"This single sentence: 'I have come to save the world,' clearly shows that the popular traveller intends to continue in France the mission that he has carried on in Africa; we shall await with interest the revelations which he has so mysteriously announced. It is certain that Magloire Dubourg has not left Africa for France without serious reasons."

"Well, I think," a woman broke in, "that he has come to ask the deputies to let the Little Sisters come to France."

"No, no," said the dairywoman confidently, "it's about political affairs with the English."

The others lost patience.

"Do listen. Let her go on reading."

The editor gave a fairly accurate report of the saint's words, but as his paper was a Government organ, he had passed over in silence the Evangelist's attacks on the French colonial administration. Moreover, since his circulation of a million and a half depended chiefly upon the masses, he had omitted anything that remotely resembled a new idea and had skilfully evaded all religious pronouncements, in order not to clash with the convictions of anyone.

The daily papers had devoted almost the whole of their front page to the saint, with large photographs showing him surrounded by his relatives, or on the terrace, bareheaded, with his priest's cape over his shoulders.

"*Magloire Dubourg States that God has sent him to Reform the World.*" was the sub-title in the *Tribune*.

The *Echo de France* displayed the headline:

"*Saint Magloire intends to make Sensational Disclosures.*"

"*Apostle or Visionary?*" asked the *Socialist Cri Public*. Lastly, the *Illustré* wrote above its ten photographs: "*The Prophet Predicts Disaster,*" and underneath, as a caption, the sayings of Magloire Dubourg: "*A Storm of Unparalleled Violence Threatens the World.*"

The articles on the whole were favourable, and reflected the admiration of the journalists. Jacques de Nointel, in the *Quotidien*, recalled past miracles and asserted that the Evangelist had more surprises in store, "for his pierced hands could only be outstretched in deeds of wonder."

"He is going to heal the sick," a broken old voice in the shop declared.

The dairywoman resumed her work, filling little bowls with chocolate which the workmen drank standing. The woman with the newspaper continued her reading in a lower voice, blundering over the difficult words; and the admiring housewives listened to the strange names of countries where the saint had worked his miracles, against a fantastic background of giant trees, and tangled lianas, on the banks of great rivers where the naked roots of the mangroves seem like the breeding-place of snakes. Nointel, who had more information than the others, reported that at Goré, shortly before his departure, Magloire Dubourg had saved the country from a disaster by driving off with his prayers a plague of locusts, which were about to swoop upon the millet fields.

"Is that in Africa, too?" inquired the shopwoman, serving and listening at the same time.

She appealed to a customer who was blowing into his steaming cup :

"You ought to know that, Monsieur Van den Kris, you have travelled so much."

The man raised his head, and everyone looked at him. He was rather short, rotund and clean-shaven; and he was dressed in a greenish-grey suit such as tourists wear. He had a cheerful countenance, and the air of a gourmand; and it was probably to counteract his easy-going effect that in conversation he adopted a preoccupied expression, raising his eyebrows and pulling at his ears as though every word perplexed him.

"Goré," he replied, "is on the Logone, on the old Cameroon border."

"But is that in Africa?" the dairywoman insisted.

"Why, of course, the Cameroons are in Africa."

The shopkeeper nodded her head respectfully :

"Oh, you—well, you know everything. . . . Have you been there, in those very places?"

"Yes, in 1906, buying ivory. . . . I might have come across Magloire Dubourg, for I went up the Ubangui less than a month after he did. I should have liked that, because his brother is one of my great friends. I must go and call on them to-day at Barlincourt. . . . Good-morning, madame."

Putting down his ten sous on the counter, he went out quickly, pleased with the effect he had produced, but unwilling to listen to the dairywoman who was calling him back.

Everywhere, in the crowded streets along which clerks were hastening, in the entrances of the Underground stations, people talked of nothing but the saint. Factory girls, who scarcely ever bought a newspaper, jostled each other at the kiosks, not even giving the vendor time to fold the sheets; and then they stood at the edge of the pavement

to read the news at once. Friends were calling to each other :

"Hallo ! are you coming with me ? I'm taking the day off to go to Barlincourt."

The masses were deeply stirred by the strange sayings of the saint. People expected supernatural happenings, without quite knowing why. The day no longer seemed like other days.

"Perhaps we'll get a holiday," mused a youngster, who was kicking a cork along the gutter on his way to school.

At the door of a large shop the assistants were crowded together, discussing the subject before they went in. Men were reading the news aloud amidst a buzz of arguments, while the listening saleswomen giggled nervously. Bernheim's derisive article provoked in one group a sudden burst of hooting.

"All the same," a solitary voice protested, "he is right. After all, your Dubourg is only a sham priest."

Everyone was angry with the speaker.

"Why a priest ? He dresses just like everybody else."

"And how do you know that the Pope isn't going to excommunicate him, just out of sheer jealousy ?"

A small girl in black shouted in a piercing voice :

"Leave him alone ! He's dotty . . . too much cinema."

The whole group burst out laughing. Others were scrambling for copies of the *Dernière Heure* : the only paper to announce that Magloire Dubourg was likely soon to be canonised and formally proclaimed a saint by the Papal Court. The writer reminded his readers that in olden days saints were nominated directly by the people, the ecclesiastical authorities only being called upon to sanction the election, and that in consideration of the exceptional services rendered to Catholicism by the man from Africa, the Holy See had decided to revert to the ancient custom and to canonise Magloire Dubourg without the usual formalities as established by Alexander III. Moreover, the

Evangelist fulfilled all the requirements of Canon Law: his reputation for sanctity was manifest, he had never been the object of public worship, he had heroically practised the human virtues of justice, prudence, strength, temperance, and the Divine virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Finally, he had accomplished many more than three miracles. The judges of the Rota, on being consulted, had delivered a favourable opinion—thus the *Dernière Heure*—and the only point still open to discussion was whether the Pope would convoke a Council, or whether he would issue a decree placing the name of Magloire Dubourg on the Roll of the saints.

M. Van den Kris had read all this over the shoulder of a messenger boy. . . .

"They are clever enough, those people," said the workman to him, handing the paper to a mate; "they give him a step up, and then shut him up in their sacristies so that he can't get away from them."

The man in the tweed suit departed with a pensive air. He was moved by the thought of approaching this extraordinary personage. On the one hand he was pleased, but on the other he felt uneasy, foreseeing that Magloire Dubourg would talk to him about Africa.

Some twenty years earlier, M. Van den Kris had shown great enthusiasm for the Evangelist, then in the dawn of his glory. One Sunday morning he had called upon the novelist, who was then unknown to him, and had offered to take a letter to his brother, whom he said that he was sure to come across during his expedition in the Ubangui country. M. Van den Kris was quite in earnest, and convinced that he was going to Africa, though he had no idea on whose behalf, nor by what means he was going: maps accumulated on his table together with Galloch's and Père Lejeune's negro vocabularies; but at the last moment he had stayed at home. "The business," he explained, "had fallen through." Then, a few months later, 'ter a suitable interval, he went back to the

Dubourgs, and told them that having been unable to get in touch with Saint Magloire, he had entrusted the letter to a friend of his, a Lakka chief, who would be sure to deliver it at the peanut picking. In this way M. Van den Kris had made friends with the Dubourgs, who at that time had only recently been married.

He was, indeed, a most entertaining guest and a most surprising explorer. No one could accuse him of boasting, for he very seldom talked actually about himself. He never described his travels: he simply hinted at them. For instance, he never said: "When I was in the Congo," but "When I was out there," which lent itself to any interpretation and could even conceal the truth.

He infected others with his own nostalgia when he talked about Africa, and, as a result of listening to his stories, three of his colleagues, seized with sudden madness, took ship one fine day for Porto-Novo, whence they were destined never to return.

As another man might offer a cigarette, he offered kola nuts to all comers, consuming an astounding quantity himself. He always carried some about with him, in a pouch made of palm-fibre; and the son of his concierge had munched so many that at last he had fallen ill, with nerves on edge and inflamed intestines. Evil tongues even went to the length of declaring that the nuts had killed the poor boy.

It was only possible to form a true estimate of the travels of M. Van den Kris by guess-work and deduction, by connecting certain allusions, and adding them to various vague remarks.

Everything about him was mysterious, even his name. In reality he was only Joseph Christian, a fairly common name, and legend had it that he had received his pseudonym from the Bloemfontein Dutch, who, on his return from a zebu hunt, had bestowed the freedom of their city upon him.

On this morning, the pseudo-Dutchman only put in a brief appearance at the colonial import company of

which he was the oldest representative; and having promised the manager to bring him back an auto-graphed photo of the saint, he went off to catch his train.

In spite of his absent-mindedness, M. Van den Kris noticed an unusual activity round the Gare du Nord. The pavement was crowded with poor muffled-up people who walked with difficulty, and with mothers pushing perambulators. The motor-buses were arriving crammed to suffocation. Inside the station there reigned the bustle of the eve of a holiday. Winding queues of passengers squabbled in front of the ticket-offices, and many went off without tickets, for the collectors could no longer keep order at the entrance to the platforms.

"To Barlincourt! To Barlincourt!" people were heard shouting on all sides.

The disorganised crowd swayed backwards and forwards, to right and left, pouring in through all the passages, regardless of barriers. All these cripples and idlers wanted to see Saint Magloire. The miracle man drew them like a magnet.

Invalids were to be seen in the waiting rooms, stretched out on the benches, or lying on stretchers. Two men wearing ambulance badges came along hastily, led by a little girl in tears.

"Mummy's dying," she screamed in a terrified voice.

"To Barlincourt! . . . To Barlincourt! . . ." fresh passengers shouted as they ran by without even turning their heads.

"There is another train in an hour. This one is full."

M. Van den Kris thrust himself into the crowd like a wedge, sticking out his elbows; and to help himself through he shouted in an irritated voice:

"Come, don't push! There are children here!"

He managed to find room in the van at the back of the train. The carriages were overflowing; clusters

of men hung on to the dirty roofs of the coaches, at the risk of being killed in the first tunnel. All were shouting and vociferating, nearly all the faces flaming with excitement. Their clamour filled the great glass-roofed hall where the steaming locomotives waited. High up on the panes the light of the morning sun was breaking into little blinding flashes. People were singing in chorus :

“It’s Magloire, Magloire, Magloire,
It’s Magloire we want,
Oh ! Oh ! Oh ! Oh !”

The whistle of the engine blew; then the overloaded train, with a violent jerk, started heavily on its way. From every platform cheers went up in answer to the triumphant shouts of those who were leaving. Then by degrees the noise died down, and coming from the carriages in front the first words of a psalm were heard.

The invalids were singing.

Barlincourt, too, was excited. At the Aubernon factory, work was almost at a standstill. The first trains from Paris had already brought hundreds of sight-seers, who wandered in groups through the startled streets of the little town.

At the Dumarchey Café, the nearest to the King’s Domain, people could be heard brawling through the open doors. On a chromo-lithograph, framed in black wood, a cock with flapping wings presided over the bar.

“When this cock shall crow,
Credit we’ll allow.”

This was the only ornament of the premises, besides some shelves laden with bottles. The room smelt of stale tobacco and coffee grounds.

The Dumarchey girl was sewing without looking

at her work, crouched on a straw stool: her wicked grey eyes were as at home in the darkness as a cat's. When one of the customers shouted out an order, she laid down her sewing ungraciously and served him with an abrupt movement of her elbow, as if anxious to get rid of him. She never softened except when she spoke to Milot, who was the only customer to whom credit was given.

The cripple, who by dint of raising his voice invariably got the last word, was arguing at the moment with old Moucron. Round the table some peasants were listening, turning over their thoughts in silence. The workmen were standing by the counter.

"All the same," repeated the obstinate farmer, "he is not an ordinary man; I have seen him, quite close, and, I tell you, he doesn't look like anybody else."

"The *Français* says that in Africa he made it rain whenever he liked," said a market-gardener who was worried by the drought.

"Of course," jeered the sacristan, seated on a corner of the table, with his wooden leg stuck out; "Don't you worry. Dubourg will ask the Lord to turn on the tap and send rain for your peas."

Old Moucron went on stubbornly:

"And in that kind of book with the pictures, it said that the animals didn't dare touch him, not even the lions. . . . And that he walked across a river on foot without even getting wet."

Milot, beside himself with rage, got up:

"Well," he bellowed, "then you're going to say he's a saint too, and that he works miracles."

"I don't say that," the old man retorted craftily, "but what I do say is that he's a man that knows more than us and that he has powers."

"Powers!" jeered the sacristan. "He has no more power than my old boots, this saint of yours; only it is just old flats like you that fool everybody with your greasy tongues. . . . If you'd been in Africa you wouldn't let them stuff such tales into you. Those

niggers are the worst liars in the world. As for Colonials, I know what they're made of. Half of them are off their heads, and those that aren't are ticket-of-leave men that will swear to anything if you only oil their palms. . . . It's easy enough to tin a beetroot like you, all ready-cooked, who has never done anything but dig his fields. . . ."

"Saint or no saint," mumbled the peasant, "anyway, he's a man that doesn't spend his life drinking, like some we know of. . . ."

The one-legged man resented this attack.

"You don't know what you're talking about, Father Moucron," he replied. "You're drivelling—only fit for the alms-house, you are!"

"Oh, Milot," protested the old man, trying to look cool and dignified, "that's not decent. . . ."

"No, that's not a thing to say," agreed one of the others.

The hostess, seeing that the door-keeper was getting the worst of it, came to his rescue.

"Come, come, don't quarrel on a day like this. Look, here come some more Parisians. It's a regular pilgrimage."

Milot came up to the counter, hitching up his corduroys with both hands.

"I don't argue with clod-hoppers," he said to the workmen. "I despise them."

Through the window-panes, clouded with dust, groups of people could be seen walking by. Someone caught sight of a policeman passing on a bicycle.

"Ho! Ho!" said old Moucron. "Something's happening."

Without slowing down, the cyclist called out to the mistress of the café.

"I'm going to fetch the Mayor."

The policeman, indeed, was going as fast as he could. He flung his machine against the door, and without waiting for the maid who came from the kitchen dragging along in her old shoes, he shouted from the foot of the stairs:

"M. Quatrepomme! M. Quatrepomme! Come down quickly. . . ."

A door opened on the first floor, and the legs of M. Quatrepomme appeared on the landing. The Mayor had already got his boots on. Hastily he came down a few steps, and, leaning over the banisters, looked to see who was calling him.

"Well," he asked. "What has happened? Is there a fire?"

The policeman, who could not keep still, in three strides joined the Mayor half-way up the stairs.

"No," he stammered. . . . "You must come at once; it's the saint. . . ."

M. Quatrepomme jumped.

"Ah, there you are! The troubles are beginning already!"

"Yes," the bewildered policeman continued. "A demonstration. . . . The sergeant sent me. . . . They're over-running the place, and they're making a scene in the Rue de la République. They've already smashed a window."

"But who are you talking about?" said the Mayor impatiently.

"Some fellows. . . . Hundreds of them have come by train, it's Bedlam let loose; they're singing psalms on the public highway. . . . We must interfere, but there are only four of us, five with the rural police. . . . Don't forget your sash, the sergeant says. . . . And perhaps we might pick up the drummer."

"Old Rousseau! He's the biggest fool in the town."

"That doesn't matter, we want him for the crowds. . . ."

M. Quatrepomme, with knitted brows, had gone into the drawing room to fetch his tri-coloured sash, which hung on the wall beneath a photograph of himself in a frockcoat.

"I am going to ring up the Préfecture first of all,"

he mumbled. "I don't want to take anything upon myself. . . . And, after all, if there's no thieving, and no seditious shouting. . . ."

"Shouting is always seditious, M. le Maire," remarked the policeman. "Otherwise people wouldn't shout. And then there are the windows of the National Bank."

"Bah! Windows!" growled M. Quatrepomme as he put on his hat. "To begin with, the National Bank are always trying to annoy the municipality. . . . I shall keep my eye on them. . . ."

The magistrate, reluctantly following the policeman, who was pushing his bicycle, started in the direction of the Town Hall.

"I was right, after all, to be on my guard instead of dancing with joy like all those idiots," he mused as he walked along with bent head. "Indeed, I call it a nice present for the town! And, besides, am I to be 'for' or 'against?' . . . I think I had better be 'for,' anyway to start with. . . ."

The streets were full of unusual movement. Children were running up and down and nudging each other to point out the Mayor.

"Where are you off to like that, instead of being at school?" he called out angrily.

The urchins fled headlong. Only one little girl stopped, with a stupid look, her mouth wide open.

"We're going to see the miracles," said she, sniffing.

Some housewives were hastening towards the Dubourg villa. Their hair undone, kerchiefs over their heads, they went along calling to their neighbours as they passed. Some workmen, having heard the news in the noon-hour, had abandoned their work; tradesmen were closing their shops. Scarcely anybody was left in the houses.

On the threshold of his dark den, the blacksmith was hurriedly slipping into his coat.

"Well, M. le Maire," he said familiarly. "We're all going. Is it worth while, do you think?"

"We shall see, we shall see," answered M. Quatrepomme evasively.

Beyond the market-place, no one was visible: everybody had rushed off after the last batch of Parisians, a troop of noisy fellows who were marching in step to a song. The High Street looked sad and bare, with no display in the shops and all the shutters up. In the distance cries could be heard resounding clearly in the heavy atmosphere. Sulphurous clouds were passing overhead, very low. There was a feeling of storm in the air.

"We shall have hail," prophesied the policeman, looking up at the sky.

"So much the better; perhaps that will keep them quiet," answered M. Quatrepomme, more gloomy than ever.

Just then—at the corner of the Rue de Verdun—he suddenly stopped short. He had just perceived a man who was coming towards them, quite alone in the empty street. A blind man.

His head was thrown back, his white eyes exposed to the light, and with little timid taps of his stick he was feeling his way along the edge of the pavement. He sensed around him the disquieting stillness of the deserted town, and was questioning the silence in a toneless voice:

"If you please . . . the saint, the saint's house, if you please."

The villa was only just waking up, and Magloire Dubourg was alone in the garden when the advance guard arrived from Paris, sight-seers who glued their noses to the railings in the hope of getting a glimpse of the saint, without, however, daring to ring the bell. Later on they were joined by a few who had come in quest of health, and the group, as it increased, grew bolder.

Finally, a beggar with twisted limbs led them in. He pushed open the iron gate and said :

"Come along. I'm sure he won't mind."

They followed him, silently jostling one another. Dew-drops were still trembling on the grass, and the wet shrubs held the fragrance of early morning.

Now and then a bough, stirred by the breeze, shook a little spray of water, like a cool powder, from the tips of its leaves. Birds were ruffling their plumage as they sang.

A small girl with white cheeks, who limped painfully, left the path and went to pick lilies of the valley and primroses under the trees.

"Come here at once !" cried her mother in a subdued voice.

"Wait a second, I'm making a posy."

The pilgrims passed under a green archway from which ivy dropped in glossy clusters; then they stopped, embarrassed. They were in front of the house. The shutters of both stories were closed, but on the other side of the out-buildings cocks could be heard crowing, and a dog barked as he tugged at his chain.

"Shall we go and have a look over there?" suggested the bandy-legged man.

Hesitatingly they passed up the three steps to the terrace, and as they went forward the gravel crunched beneath their feet. Under the lime-tree, some wicker chairs, drawn close together, seemed to be continuing a conversation, and the embarrassed intruders had the feeling of actually disturbing people. Stopping short of the foot of the steps which led up to the house, they looked at the closed door, disconcerted, wondering what to do.

"Why have you come in here? What do you want?"

The rough voice startled them, and, suddenly alarmed, they turned round abruptly. At the first glance they recognised the saint. Dressed in his long

clerical cape, bare-headed, he stood motionless under the ivied archway. He was holding close to him the little girl with the posy.

"You are sight-seers, are you not?" went on Magloire Dubourg. "You wanted to see me. Well, you have seen me, now go away."

The men had taken off their hats. The women, abashed, bent their heads, and looked at him from under their eyelids, afraid to move. The lame man leant heavily on his sticks, and put on a pitiable expression, drawing his mouth on one side as though his suffering produced the spasm. It was he who was bold enough to speak.

"Yes, of course," he said in a whining voice, "we did want to see you. But all the same that's not enough. If you would help us. . . . We are poor cripples, you see. Look at me, I'm sort of paralysed in both legs. Well, you can do such a lot, you . . ."

The saint let go the child's shoulder and stepped forward, the dark wings of his mantle fluttering about him. He went up to the cripple and gazed at him so steadily that the other, daunted, turned away his eyes.

"I see," he said, "you come to me as if I were a quack. It is your leg you are thinking of, isn't it? But what about your soul? Have you ever thought about that? Yet it is far more twisted than your limbs. I can see it, that soul of yours, and it is your soul that you should try to cure. A day will come when you will no longer need your legs to carry you, my lad, but on that day you will still have your soul to carry. Listen to my advice: take care of it."

Then he turned towards the others, and his wrathful aspect amazed them. They had expected that he would bend upon them a face of heavenly mildness, like the saints in sacred pictures, and all they beheld was harsh features and angry eyes under bushy grey brows.

"You, too, are no doubt in need of healing," he said roughly, coming close to them. "You, too, want to be cured, and you come and pray to me. You do not entreat the Master but beseech the servant. You don't believe in God, do you? He is too high up, and the most devout amongst you have never thought that Heaven could hear their lamentations; but because I am alive, because I am made of flesh and blood, because you can see me and touch me, you believe in my power. What do you expect from me? I can do nothing, you hear? Nothing. I am neither priest nor a doctor; nor even a wizard."

Drawing the folds of his cloak about him, he stared at them one after the other, without moving, all the life of him flaming in his strange, pale eyes.

"Why have you come here? You there, you are a working man, are you not? Why have you left your work? And you, are you not a mother? Who is looking after your children? Are you not ashamed of your deserted homes? Come, go back. This is neither a hospital nor a church. Be off with you!"

A woman, taking her courage in both hands, dared to answer him. She had fat mottled cheeks and wore a jet bonnet and black gloves.

"We wanted to see you, and to pray to God afterwards," she blurted out with an air of false humility.

The saint eyed her from head to foot.

"Do you think God needs so many prayers?" he asked harshly. "The best prayers are silent ones. There is work for you at home; and God is better pleased with your work than with Paternosters which your lips mumble though your heart has no part in them. You mothers, praise God by taking care of your children and by looking after your houses. And as for you, you praise Him when you handle your file, when you work in your office. The painful labour of mankind is one vast hymn which rises to Heaven and ceases neither by night nor by day. One half of the world strives and suffers while the other sleeps;

the perpetual labour of mankind eternally follows the bright course of the sun, and ever since the Earth began to revolve the clamour of man's work rises to God, as though to say: 'We have obeyed Thee, O Lord; we earn our bread by the sweat of our brow.' Will you, then, disobey on my account? Others are earning your daily bread for you while you are idling here. Go away. Did you think, cripple, that you would return home on dancing feet? And you who have lost your eye, did you think I was going to give it back to you? Why, you insult God when you imagine that He is like a dishonest doctor, who only attends to patients who groan loudest, or those who are recommended to him. I have counted you, there are fifteen or twenty of you here; is there a single one among you who has considered the sore places in his heart? No, it is your body, always your body, that you worry about. Not one of you is afraid of the shameful cancer eating at his heart, which may yet make him suffer throughout Eternity. The husk of you is nothing, do you understand me, cripple? And I do not pity you. Death is a journey that we make naked with no baggage but our souls, and you will not take your twisted limbs with you into the other life, any more than the rich man will take his treasures."

The pilgrims listened to him, trembling, without understanding. His words were beyond their comprehension. As he advanced towards them with flaming eyes, twisting his cape convulsively in his fingers, they withdrew fearfully, drawing closer to one another for mutual comfort, their eyes still fixed on him. His passionate faith terrified them, like a sudden fit of madness.

"You all understand me, don't you?" said the Saint more harshly than ever. "You understand, cripple?"

He stepped forward abruptly. With a start the frightened band of pilgrims drew away. The bandy-legged man, who was in the front row, propped himself

up on his sticks and tried to hide himself among the others.

The saint stared at all the dumb faces, whose eyes never left him. Surprised eyes, cowardly eyes, beseeching eyes. Not one look of love, not one look of faith among them.

"Yes," he continued bitterly, "I am talking to blockheads without ears. What do you care about the Hereafter, or the Soul, or Eternal Life? You didn't come here for that, I know; you came like loafers, or like gullible fools running after a charlatan. You talk of future bliss, you believe in nothing but what can be eaten, you see no further than the bottom of your trough. What you were really expecting was a magician in a white robe, a miracle-worker who would heal the sick and quicken the dead, if only to provide amusement for you. Now here you are, disappointed and frightened. Get away from here, I can do nothing, and I will do nothing for you. . . . Begone!"

He flung the words at them in a voice of thunder, his arms raised to Heaven, his clenched fists still holding his cloak. He looked like an enormous black bird, with wings outspread. The pilgrims, alarmed, withdrew towards the avenue, slowly at first, then faster and faster, scattering as they went. As they passed out of the ivy-covered archway several of them began to run.

"Begone! Begone!" the saint continued to shout from the bottom step of the terrace.

The little white-checked girl alone looked at him without fear, out of her large wondering eyes. When she saw her mother running with the rest, she turned as though to follow her; then she came back with her little limping steps, and, approaching Magloire Dubourg, held out her flowers to him.

"Please, sir," she said in a frail voice, "may I keep them?"

The saint bent his head, and, for the first time, a

smile lit up his features. He stooped, and lifted the child right off the ground in his long gnarled hands. The small wasted form weighed nothing at the end of his outstretched arms, and he looked with pity at the tiny blanched face with its nose that was so comically long and pointed.

"They are yours, little one, keep them and think of me."

The child, although she was not frightened, shivered nervously, and her lovely feverish eyes plunged deep into those of the saint.

"Remember that the old African does not want you to be ill? Eh? He won't have it. . . . You must get nice fat cheeks and make happiness for others. Now, run along to mother."

He kissed her—two smacking rustic kisses—and set her down again. The child raced off to catch up the others. Her mother, seeing her run, screamed out :

"You'll fall !"

But the little girl, without lessening her speed, threw herself into her mother's arms. A slight flush tinted her cheeks. She repeated excitedly :

"Mummy, he said I was to keep the flowers and not to be sick any more."

The perturbed mother looked at her child, whose thin little hands she was holding tight.

"But you ran, my Nenette, how did you do that?" she questioned in a trembling voice. "And you didn't fall down. . . . How did you manage to run?"

"I don't know, Mummy, I don't know."

The little one smiled up at her with a radiant expression that the mother had never seen on her face before.

They were the last to pass out of the gate. The bewildered mother stared at the curious crowd without seeing them. There were two or three hundred now, waiting for those who had gone into the garden.

"What is he like?"

"What did he say to you?"

At that moment the mother, who was still holding her child close to her with both hands, uttered a piercing cry—a long, heartrending cry, which startled everyone. Voices were hushed. A shudder passed through the crowd.

“My child is cured!” screamed the mother like a madwoman. “My child is cured!”

The little maid, her face buried in the black skirts, began unconsciously to cry—

“I am cured, I am cured!” she repeated, sobbing.

A scared silence held the crowd. The mother was still screaming unconsciously, and the long animal wail probed deeply into the very vitals of the throng. They listened with beating hearts, their legs giving way beneath them. A strange current passed from one to another. Then, suddenly, an insensate clamour broke forth—howls, cheers, a sort of frenzy, and they flung themselves upon the little girl, in a wild rush, as though a magnet had suddenly drawn them towards her.

“It’s a miracle!” they shrieked. “It’s a miracle!”

In the twinkling of an eye the crowd, squeezed and crushed together, was nothing more than a compact mass, whirling about the avenue. In the centre, invisible, was the dishevelled mother round whom they pressed. They wanted to see; they broke through knots of people; they beat one another down; and the deafening roar drowned the cries of a woman who was being trampled underfoot. Then something rose from the crush: twenty arms had just raised the little girl who was being suffocated, and the mob moved on howling, blind, leaderless, with the little slender doll in her beggar’s rags carried high above it.

“It’s a miracle!”

From all sides people were running up, attracted by the noise, local inhabitants or Parisians from the last train. The swelling throng resembled a huge beast with a thousand outstretched hands. They all

wanted to touch the child, her frock, her wasted legs. Those who were near her jostled against each other, and fought with cowardly thrusts; and the man who stumblingly was carrying her allowed himself to be borne away by the flood, with his little burden on his shoulder.

"Flower! Give me a flower!" people were shouting in the tumult.

Feverish hands snatched at these relics which the half-stupefied child distributed among them. Other hands seized on the mother, hooking on to her arms, pulling at her skirts:

"What's the little girl's name? What was the matter with her? Tell us, how long? . . . Madame, I say, Madame. . . ."

From its midst the crowd cast forth to the edge of the road invalids, cripples, old people, who emerged from the scuffle tottering, some livid, others flushed scarlet. The new-comers surrounded them, thinking they might perhaps have something to tell:

"When did it happen? Were you there?"

Some people, abandoning the crowd, turned back to the villa. One woman was wheeling a pallid youth in an invalid chair.

"Let us go quick. . . . He is sure to cure others."

Some began to turn back, then, hearing a fresh outcry, changed their minds and ran back to catch up the crowd. A stout and almost breathless man in a white waistcoat who was following kept on saying:

"They should have it confirmed at once by a doctor. Do tell them."

But nobody was listening to him. They were watching the child who had been healed, and, throwing themselves back into the whirlpool to get closer to her, they joined in the universal shout of:

"It's a miracle! It's a miracle!"

The news spread quickly through Barlincourt.

"The saint has cured a little lame girl."

"No, it was a paralytic, a child who was as good as dead."

The rumour was carried from door to door, from mouth to mouth, and the whole population was already out of doors when the noise of the procession drew near. The Parisians, coming out of the station, hurried along, attracted by the din. The street was full to overflowing; curious spectators were being squeezed against the houses and thrown back into the passages. The turbulent mob moved forward, cleaving its way through the mass of onlookers. People were leaning out of all the windows; a single cry went up from the pavement and fell from the upper floors

"Here she is!"

The fragile figure of the child could be seen at once, dominating the maelstrom. Old women crossed themselves. Lads were trying to make jokes, but only half-heartedly with dry throats and strange shudders that made their flesh creep. It was a storm that went by, a torrent.

The shrill voices of women rose suddenly, intoning the *MAGNIFICAT*, but were at once drowned in the shouting. Only a few persistent devotees, who knew the words, went on chanting in falsetto tones. Their dark-clad group with the mother at its head could be seen round the little girl with the flowers. Behind them came the whirl of the rabble. . . . The men too were shouting incoherently to relieve their strained nerves. For a moment came cries of "Hurrah for the saint!" to a revolutionary tune. . . . After that nothing but confused noise . howling, singing, whistling.

They passed almost before a glimpse of them could be caught. The boys racing in pursuit caught up the procession, which was growing larger at every cross-road. Behind them the street was left nearly empty, for the crowd carried with it everyone except a few terrified old women.

M. Quatrepomme, very pale, looked after them as

they disappeared. He had been thrown against a shop-front and had clung to it as well as he could, his constable having been torn away from him. Dumbfounded, he was thinking :

"There are over two thousand of them."

He felt weak and helpless; all his courage had fled.

"Shall I go up to the villa to thank the saint and find out what has happened, or shall I go to the station?" he asked himself.

He decided on the station, as being less compromising.

"Ah, you come at the right moment," gasped the distracted station-master. "They broke down the barriers to get out quicker. The next train is signalled, what on earth will happen? I have had a telephone message, saying it is packed to the roofs. We ought to have some gendarmes."

Railway employees were running in all directions. They had found some wire and were hastily repairing the fence over which the sergeant of gendarmerie was ordered to mount guard. In the cloak room some men were bending over an epileptic, who was recovering from a fit, exhausted, his eyes still glassy.

"Look out! Here she comes!" shouted the station master hearing the signal bell.

The engine was growing bigger at the further end of the glittering rails. In an uproar of yells and whistles, the train steamed in. The engine was panting like a runner out of breath, expanding its broad athletic chest and clenching the tenacious fists of its buffers.

Doors slammed all along the train. It was like a cask from which the bung had been pulled out. Passengers gushed out from everywhere and the train had not ceased moving before the platform was already swarming with people. A mad clamour, which overrode the whistles and the grating of the brakes, filled the air. Passengers were still jumping out, as if the overcrowded carriages were contracting and squeezing them forth.

After two hours of jolting and suffocation, on the edge of sickness, they shouted with relief as they escaped from their stifling vapour-baths. It was the disorderly crowd of racing Sundays. The sergeant, standing erect in front of the gap in the fence, clamed out :

"Exit, further along !"

But the passengers did not move; they wanted to see the sick people.

"Come, move on !" shouted the station officials.

In some inexplicable fashion the train had hardly arrived before everyone who had travelled in it knew that a little girl had just been healed, and the story grew in wonder as it passed from mouth to mouth. Some young rascals, who had travelled on the roof of the train or by hanging on to the bars, were now trying to climb over the barrier

"That's forbidden," bawled the gendarme, red with rage. . . . "I'll send for the Mayor !"

They burst out laughing at the absurd threat :

"Will he come in his sabots?" jeered the wags.

"Tell him to put on his best smock."

People were still streaming out of the train: it seemed as if it was never going to be emptied. They were all running pell-mell towards the front coaches, where the sick had been accommodated. Out of these carriages came a stifling smell of carbolic and iodoform. Crowding round the doors as though round hospital windows, tossing about on their seats and stretchers, the invalids were shouting "Barlincourt ! Barlincourt !" in tones of ecstasy, such as Crusaders may have used as they cried "Jerusalem !" on the stony hills of the Holy Land.

They all wanted to get out at once, and the less feeble were pushing the others back, with malevolent glances, as if each expected to be healed merely by setting foot on this blessed soil. They longed to breathe freely again, to be relieved from the strain, to get away from hard boards that bruised their backs.

Several, in spite of their feeble limbs, jumped from the train while it was still moving, and a final jolt threw an emaciated woman who had been standing upon a foot-board on to the platform.

Arms were stretched out on all sides to help them to get out. There were consumptives with hollow cheeks and glittering eyes; children with hip-disease, with their legs in plaster of Paris; men crippled with gout, people with livid faces, afflicted with cancer; hideous features corroded by lupus, old men who coughed, invalids with bilious skin, suffering from liver-complaints, epileptics: a horrible procession of pain and disease, waste products of humanity waiting to be swept away by Death.

"Is the villa very far?" they asked directly they alighted. "Show us the way quickly."

But they could only move one step at a time, for the narrow gateway held them back. People were jammed together under the portico; but those at the back still pushed forward, and the mass, too tightly packed, finally broke, bursting through the office doors, which rattled madly in a crash of broken glass. The noise redoubled. The station-master, crushed against the wall, thundered orders and threats which no one understood. The squeals of women cut across the tumult; terrified children were lifted up; and above all the uproar there could be heard the irritated whistle of the train demanding free passage.

Suddenly there emerged from the press a large placard, lifted up by two railwaymen, who with an effort placed it upright against the clock. It was an inspiration of M. Quatrepomme's. Everyone read it at the same moment;

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

"There are no miracles within the bounds
of the parish."

The Municipal Authorities.

For an instant the passengers were taken aback, at a loss to understand; then all at once an infernal hooting broke out, a huge explosion of laughter, a volley of hisses. The crowd, which for a moment had been motionless, drove forward again like a battering ram, more window-panes crashed, the whole barrier collapsed, the door of the cloak room was driven in, and the unchained multitude, breaking loose like a sea overflowing its dykes, seemed to escape in all directions.

The noise reached the market-place and filled the avenue. Songs arose amid the din of rioting, and suddenly M. Quatrepomme, who had taken shelter in the telegraph office, heard the rolling of a drum. He thought it was a signal of police intervention, and his heart sank.

"My God!" he moaned. "What are they up to?"

But the drum had, after all, a cheerful sound. It seemed to be beating time, gaily sounding the reveille, and the noise of the crowd died away in the distance.

It was old Rousseau who, unable to make head or tail of the contradictory orders which he had received, had resolutely placed himself at the head of the demonstrators, and, stepping out briskly—just as on each 14th of July he was accustomed to lead the fire-brigade—he conducted the procession to the villa, with a joyous rat-a-tat.

CHAPTER IV

ABOUT midday the crowd, which until then had been good-tempered, roughly invaded the King's Domain, trampling on the lawns, plundering the kitchen garden; and a great human sea surged against the four walls of the villa. A ceaseless hum ascended from the multitude: sometimes a more violent clamour arose, like a wave, and broke itself at the foot of the house. But the door remained shut, the windows did not open. The saint had shown himself once, and in the midst of the tumult only those in the front rank had heard his words.

Heads rose out of the crowd, to breathe a little air and to look around, but the surf passed, and the black waters of the crowd engulfed everything, while other faces appeared above craning necks.

The heat was overwhelming; it was one of those thundery days when there seems to be no air. The light was dim. The blue hills on the horizon dwindled under the low skies, as though afraid. Thunder rolled in the distance.

The trees were laden with urchins who clustered in their branches. Others sat on the window-sills of the out-houses, and it was a matter for wonder how they could have climbed so high. Sometimes the ladder of a cinema operator swayed perilously, and frightened women uttered shrill cries, already foreseeing the moment when man and box would fall on them. All these sweating bodies now formed one solid mass. Tired of marking time, some of the curious emerged from the crush and returned to the Avenue, where at least they were able to breathe. Hawkers threaded their way through the groups.

"*La Dernière Heure*, buy *La Dernière Heure*, Noon Edition." . . .

The crowd was speaking of nothing but miracles, and the thousands of voices purred like a prayer. The atmosphere and the waiting engendered fever. A single cure only was certain so far, that of the little girl, but others were being invented, under cover of that ubiquitous "they say" which knows everything and is always believed.

Everyone was talking about paralytics cured, blind whose sight had been restored, of the well which had been suddenly filled; and these lies produced shivers of anticipation. Their souls, their minds, had yet to blend together, like their breath; one single anxious heart was beating for them all.

The multitude was undergoing a nervous tension, a crisis of impatience; and those who had congregated on the lawn, where they could see nothing, suddenly began to jostle each other, and to shout. But the compact mass remained unshaken. It panted for breath, but it did not budge.

The crowd only moved asunder, leaving a narrow passage through which the infirm trickled in a thin stream; as the thronged terrace could hold no more, they stopped at the foot of the small staircase, and those who were more fervent kissed the step where Magloire Dubourg, lifting the child in his arms, had performed his first miracle. Around the well, the sick and the cripples pressed, like a hospital in the open air, some squatting on the ground, others resting on cane seats, or lying in easy-chairs and on stretchers. Those who were able to drag themselves along were grouped at the foot of the steps, shoulder to shoulder, exhausted, shivering; here the bluish temple of a child pressing against the knees of a mother, encountered by chance; there, a neurasthenic, twitching convulsively, who nevertheless thrust back with disgust a coughing consumptive. They all had horrible faces with projecting bones and bloated flesh. Their

crutches, grasped between their spare fingers, rose above these emaciated forms, like crosses already planted above them.

Hidden behind the curtains of the drawing room, the saint was gazing at the poor wretches, his heart heavy within him. Behind him, Yvonne, moved with pity, whispered,

"If it starts raining, there will be no time to carry them away—some are going to die. . . ."

"True," said the Evangelist, "in the church they would find shelter."

As he looked at them, he begged Heaven to pardon him this idolatrous worship, which men were rendering him.

He had been one of the last to hear of the little girl's cure, and was scarcely astonished by it. God had wished it. . . . Perhaps their unreasoning confidence would allow the truth, of which he was depository, to spring up all the better. . . . His ardent eyes searched for faith in those other anguished ones.

The scenes which unrolled themselves were alternately ludicrous and pathetic. In her dress of black serge, the widow Pelé stood up a gaunt figure in the midst of the sick. By dint of nagging and the play of her bony elbows, she had been able to slip up to the house, where she had appointed herself overseer of the invalids. She directed their prayers with her peevish voice; when all were beginning to moan in unison she intoned the cry of Lourdes—"Lord, cure our sick," and her yelping pierced the ear.

"Lord, cure our sick," the crowd repeated in a hollow murmur.

Whenever the hubbub diminished the bigot struck up a hymn, beating the measure with her black psalm book.

Advised by the natives, the curious had walked round the estate, having entered it by the fields, but at once they had found themselves pressed in hundreds

against the espalier-covered wall, and no one could get through the narrow door of the terrace. Unable to see anything, they had to content themselves with hearing the noise of the crowd, and they waited in the expectation of something happening to make them move on. Those who were most tired sat down on the sorrel borders. To pass the time they tried to imitate the strident voice of Mme. Pelé, which never stopped bawling. As soon as she began to sing, they shouted to her.

"Shut up, you will frighten him. . . . Haven't you finished clucking?" while a brat, sitting astride the wall, copied her in a squeaky voice.

"Lord, cure our sick!"

In the park, there were fewer people; it was possible to rest at ease. Families, with their string-bags of provisions, had settled themselves on the grass; one could have imagined oneself in the woods of Vincennes. Children were swinging on a rope fixed between two trees. Men in shirt-sleeves went across to Dumarchey's to buy wine.

They did not return at once, for the miraculously cured little girl was in the dancing hall, where the doctors were examining her; and the court-yard was crowded. All along the glass partition curious people had their eyes glued to the panes. Some kindly ambulance men, burdened with bandaging outfits and stretchers, had set up a first-aid station there.

"It is to look after those whom the saint will be too lazy to attend to," scoffed Milot, who alone had maintained a mocking attitude in the midst of all this enthusiasm.

The little girl, with flushed cheeks, sat exhausted at the foot of the platform, as though on an altar of paper streamers. Tired of repeating the same story twenty times, she had now become silent. Her little forehead was burning. The two doctors had kept her for an hour, examining, questioning, sounding her; and the old physician shrugged his shoulders with

impatience when the young doctor wrung a cry from her.

Old Rouquette, a worthy man of fatherly presence, who had physicked the district for the last thirty years, was ready to admit a kind of miraculous cure, perhaps aided by auto-suggestion; but Dr. Blum, a lanky young man with horn-rimmed spectacles, who had recently established himself at Barlincourt, where he had introduced the last word in fashionable therapeutics from Paris, remained intractable and denied the miracle.

"Well, one thing is certain at all events," grumbled the old practitioner, "she can walk now, and she no longer suffers."

"That is not enough to convince me," retorted the other, tight-lipped. And, never ceasing to take notes, he continued his inquiries. He asked the mother for information about her confinement, whether the father drank, in what hospital the child had been treated, even going into embarrassing details on the heredity of the child, whether there had been venereal disease or insanity in the family. Then he turned to the little girl, feeling her legs doubtfully, as if hesitating whether he should buy her or not. Behind him, leaning forward, his pince-nez fixed on his nose, M. Rouquette also looked at the child.

"It is obvious," he diagnosed, "scrofulous necrosis, by Jove! It is as clear as daylight."

Full of his own importance, Dr. Blum did not answer; he was still busily scribbling. At last he declared,

"I have enough data now: I am going to draw up my report."

"Very well, sir, so shall I," exploded Rouquette, as if taking up a challenge, "and probably we shall not agree."

They sat down at the same table, face to face; and, watching each other stealthily, they began to write two reports, which contradicted each other in every detail.

Dr. Blum murmured scraps of speech, "Nervous coxalgy . . . general neuropathic condition. . . . Acute pains on the left side of the rhachis, without objective signs."

In the meantime he was thinking :

"If this old bone-setter maintains there has been a miracle, I will ruin him in the whole district."

Meanwhile Rouquette, shaking his fountain pen, growled into his beard :

"He doesn't even know enough to distinguish a child that is ill from one that isn't. . . . No fear that you'll get my practice, mountebank. . . ."

The little girl had only a few faded flowers remaining from her posy. She had flung them to the crowd, giving them into all the outstretched hands, but suddenly she decided :

"I'll keep the rest for myself."

She had then been offered money; people besieged the mother with entreaties, and a sort of tariff was established. A spray of lily-of-the-valley reached ten francs. It was this that gave Petit Louis the idea of also selling relics; he had despoiled the garden on the sly of all its flowers, even to the Maréchal Joffre in the large flower-bed, and the plants in bud in the hot-houses, to sell them to the loafers.

"Who hasn't got a pretty souvenir?" he bawled in front of the café. "Flowers gathered by Saint Magloire. Who hasn't got a lucky charm?"

The little girl had been photographed at least ten times for the newspapers, and the hall was filled with the acrid fumes of magnesium. Dead with fatigue, the mother had but one idea, to return to Paris; lassitude had subdued her feverish joy, and, sitting with bruised limbs in her chair, she wearily answered the reporters. It fell to Dr. Rouquette to give them information, and this he did with the loquacity of a showman at a fair.

"A wonderful case, gentlemen. A child who has been treated for necrosis for years. The illness began

with anchylosis of both insteps. . . . Lower your stocking, my darling. . . .”

The inquisitive groups in the courtyard, tired of waiting to no purpose, were returning to the King's Domain, attracted thither by the noise. The crowd, greater than ever, was overwrought by the approaching thunderstorm. The wind blew in sudden gusts, the trees of the park creaked under the onset of the storm. It was hardly three o'clock, and already as dark as night.

“Real Good Friday weather,” said the women.

The dim light distorted the faces: the same anguish oppressed all hearts. They felt they had reached the limit of their endurance, something had to happen, they could wait no longer. . . .

The thunder with a continuous rumble drew closer, and each squall wrested large warm rain-drops from the low clouds. Palms were extended questioningly:

“Now, then . . . it's going to rain. . . .”

The sick, trembling with fear, began to cry and complain. They gazed at the door of the villa with beseeching eyes. “If he had been willing. . . .”

“Have pity on us,” shouted a cripple who was leaning against the wall.

The copper-hued sky oppressed them, the rolling of the thunder hurt them. The piercing voice of Madame Pelé remained without an echo; a few exhausted voices alone took up the words:

“We want God, He is our Father,
We want God, He is our King. . . .”

The hubbub of the multitude smothered the hymn. They trod on each other until they groaned, sweat pouring down their foreheads. At last a supreme clamour burst from them under a new increase of pressure:

“Lord, heal our sick.”

Abruptly the door at the top of the steps opened and Saint Magloire appeared before them.

An acclamation rose, a cry of ecstasy burst from ten thousand throats, followed by a silence so deep that one could hear at the end of the lawn the convulsive sobbing of the sick, raised on their stretchers.

Standing upright in the recess, the saint dominated the crowd, motionless, carved, in the brown velvet of his coat, like a church statue in old wood. Their eyes devoured him greedily. Nothing was heard but a protracted and relieved cry of "Ah."

Then one invalid yelled, brandishing her crutch :

"Saint, heal me !"

The others at once set up cries of entreaty : the whole of the horrible hospital, swept by the gathering storm, began to wail.

"Have pity ! Heal us. . . ."

Magloire Dubourg inclined his head, his eyes dimmed by tears, and humbly crossed himself. Uncomprehendingly all those present followed his example and made the sign of the Cross.

The supplications ascended in a woeful chorus. Twisted on his stretcher a martyr howled :

"Health or Death ! Death !"

The tidings spread like a wave over the crowd, crossed the garden, passed beyond the railing, reached the avenue :

"He has come out !"

People bumped against each other in their efforts to catch a glimpse of him, clutching right and left; children and women were seized and held up over the press. Perched on his ladder, the cinema operator was turning his crank.

The terrace presented an appalling scene. The sick, in a sort of madness, were undressing with trembling fingers to exhibit their infirmities; sores appeared, brutally denuded; from under the dressings which were wrenched away and the tattered garments emerged fleshless limbs, breasts broken by ulcers, the putrid fount of suffering. Each one wished to expose yet more horrible infirmities, to attract the

attention of the saint and awaken his pity, and they vociferated with twitching faces, hoping to be the first to monopolise his all-powerful glance,—

“Heal me! Heal me!”

“I have three small children. Have pity on my small children!”

Their intermingled voices formed but one atrocious lamentation. The struggle went on fiercely from stretcher to stretcher. The less feeble clutched at the others with ferocious hands and forced them savagely backwards in order to show themselves first. The helpless paralytics sobbed, imploring to be lifted up. Clinging to each other, haggard, convulsed, they dragged themselves like the dead from the earth on which they lay. Some tore at their wounds, to make them still more horrible. They wept, stretching forth child-like hands. It was like a horrible competition with a miracle for its prize.

Magloire Dubourg, his heart pierced with sorrow, would have liked to tell them that he was powerless to help, that he could only weep with them, but his courage failed him.

“Health or Death!” the cancerous man with the leaden complexion still continued to cry.

A tall man, miserably clothed, stood among the human wreckage and stared into emptiness, his glassy eyes seeing nothing.

“Is he there? Is he there?” gasped the raucous voice. “He will cure me, won’t he? He is looking at me? Tell me, is he looking at me?”

As he craned his neck in his fierce desire to see, the thunder pealed forth and lightning which rent the shadows suddenly illuminated the saint with a dazzling radiance. A fleeting vision: Magloire Dubourg blessing the crowd with raised hands. The shattering noise of the thunderbolt deafened them.

“I can see!” yelled the blind man.

He leaped into the midst of the dying who surrounded him, crushing their bodies, and waved his

arms about with a wide movement full of mad exultation. Pallid, grimacing with a senseless smile which split his cheeks, he smote his head with his fists.

"I can see! I am cured!"

His demented voice, born amid the thunder, passed over these thousands of heads, proclaiming the miracle, and a shudder ran through the multitude, like an electric current passing through them all.

They listened, still deafened by the noise, breathless, their hearts at a stand-still. But, their stupor once dispelled, a joyful clamour arose; the irresistible wave of the crowd threw its foremost ranks towards the villa, and in the midst of the tumult an eddy of vociferating human beings was suddenly let loose. Invalids, beside themselves, caught by the delirium, lifted themselves up for the first time on their stretchers. A cripple raised by an unknown power stood up. A squatting woman, who was moaning with the torture of her disease, felt her pain departing suddenly in the midst of the uproar, as if a red-hot iron had been withdrawn from a wound. She too uttered the cry of the miracle, in a heart-rending voice:

"I am cured! A miracle! A miracle!"

.

And throwing herself in her turn into the struggling crowd, she hurled herself towards the saint strangled by her words and sank down at his feet, overwhelmed with joy, twisting the hem of his cape in her skinny fingers, kissing and biting it till she choked.

The crowd seethed. A second storm under the tempestuous sky, with shrieks for lightnings the electrified crowd of idlers and half-clad invalids mingled, gesticulating, shouting, in a hideous uproar which drowned the entreaties of the cripples and the cries of women who were being trampled upon. Bursts of chanting arose from time to time as on wings, only to sink back into the noise. Yet the

powerful voice of the saint dominated the tumult. His eyes were searching for those who, helpless, trodden underfoot, were lost in the surge, and he cried out despairingly :

“To the church ! Bring the sick to the church !”

Instantly an orderly procession was formed in the midst of the confusion, no one knew how. The stretchers, from which lank hands drooped despairingly, passed out through a breach cut in the crowd. Those who were not cured; those on crutches, the sick who were held up under the arms, came behind; then, in a vortex of men bawling at the top of their voices, came those who had been miraculously healed, carried along in triumph. This little band wended its way through the crowd like a caterpillar of human heads; it moved forward solidly, on invisible feet, almost without stirring, propelled by its own weight.

In the avenue, order was to some extent restored. The empty stretcher of a woman who had been cured led the procession, like a banner. At the head walked the saint, and the blind man, gambolled before him, grotesque and terrifying, waving his long arms and crying perpetually like one distraught :

“I can see ! I can see !”

Through every door simultaneously, through the sacristy, by the side aisles, the fanatics invaded the church. Feverishly the cripples were carried in, and the rumbling thunder drove the stretcher-bearers forward. The black wall of the storm was coming nearer, creviced with lightnings, and the first drops, in a gust, rattled on the dry leaves of the plane-trees in the square.

“All the sick are inside,” cried someone.

Then, as though they had been waiting for this signal, the heavens burst in a deluge. The crowd which had stayed outside fled, shrieking, taking refuge in the houses, and under the trees. The church was so full that it was impossible to stir. People had climbed on to the seats, the prayer-stools, the pulpit.

A small boy scrambled up to the pedestal of the Immaculate Conception, and clung to the blue robe to save himself from falling. Magloire Dubourg mounted the three steps of the choir. Those whom he had healed, three women and a blind man, knelt at his feet :

"If these have been saved, it is by God's will," proclaimed the Evangelist, laying his hands on their brows.

"God wills it ! God wills it !" answered a man at the top of his voice.

Sobs rose up like incense from the nave. The cripples, with hope renewed, pleaded with trembling lips and eyes full of tears. Women sang distractedly. In the first row of the transept, the widow Pelé was squeaking :

"Lord ! make my son die in a state of grace. . . ."

And by pulling at his ears, she forced Joséphine to bow his head. In the sacristy, the Abbé Choisy, losing his head, was unable to get into his chasuble. He was trembling in every limb.

"We will sing thanksgivings," he gasped in a stifled voice. . . . "And I've no one to play the organ. . . . My God, it is my greatest day. . . ."

Vehement clamouring shook the window panes.

"A miracle ! A miracle !" howled the multitude.

A new cure had just taken place. The beggar at the church, the epileptic who used to sit twitching under the porch, had been swept away by the crowd as it entered, carried right up to the Sanctuary, and thrown down before the Altar. A terrible fear had taken hold of him.

"He will cure me. . . . I shall not be able to beg any more. . . ."

He was in such a condition that his inert limbs began to shiver. Pushed hither and thither, he stumbled, and his hands, as he fell, touched the mantle of the saint. He received something like a shock, and pulled himself up again with a frightened

spring. He was standing upright now, trembling no longer; his teeth had ceased chattering. Horror-stricken he looked at the saint.

"Leave me alone, leave me alone," he stammered, unable to tear his eyes away from the Evangelist.

"It is the Trembler the Trembler has been healed!"

The terrified beggar tried to escape seeking to bury himself in the mob and disappear, but could not; he was seized and carried along. . . . Then he grew dizzy, and uttering a terrible cry, let himself drop on the steps of the Sanctuary, between the weeping cancerous woman and the blind man, who was laughing in the ecstasy of seeing the sun rise again on the red and blue panes of the windows.

There was high festival in Barlincourt. Lanterns were being lit in the foliage of the gardens; it might have been the night of the fourteenth of July.

Towards the end of the day, the sick and the curious had gone back to Paris in crammed trains. The authorities had spread a report that Magloire Dubourg had been summoned to Rome by the Pope and had just left Barlincourt.

The streets, however, remained in a state of excitement and noise. People had been dining at all the wine shops; tables were set outside, and the public-houses were full of disorderly customers, some talking about medicine and religion, while others sang popular songs. At Dumarchey's they had organised a ball, and people were dancing to the strains of a gramophone for which Milot chose the records. After that day of strain there had come a brusque reaction, a craving for laughter and amusement.

At the Town Hall, the Prefect was holding an inquiry. It was reported that, when questioned on the subject of the blind man, Dr. Blum and Dr. Rouquette had, after exhausting their arguments,

come to blows, and that it had been necessary to separate them.

"I am expecting the journalists at my house," each had shouted as they left the Town Hall. "I will give them proofs!"

But the journalists had not come; they were too busy. Gathered at the Station Café, they had arrived without anyone's help at a half-way opinion, still in a state of excitement, they were beginning their articles hurriedly while they ate their ham. At the telephone which had remained open for the occasion, they could be heard dictating the details of the miracles. They had agreed to call the blind man Barnabas, for the reporters set on his track had not been able to find him and no one knew his name: it would be easy enough to rechristen him again next day. To fill in the time till he could get a portrait of him, Hardy had photographed a lorry-driver who at a distance looked a little like him.

M. Quatrepomme was triumphant. He had been driving about all the afternoon in the Prefect's motor-car to impress his constituents, and now that his day was over he was very proud of it.

"I have shown that I have a will of my own," he declared.

And to sustain this reputation he had just signed the dismissal of old Rousseau, the town drummer, condemned as incapable. Rousseau was indeed the only victim of the day, except an old fellow who had died at Dumarchey's from the energetic attentions lavished on him by immature ambulance-men.

Abbé Choisy was rejoicing. At eight o'clock in the evening he had held a special service, and by order of his mother Joséphin Pelé had seen to it that the bell rang incessantly, but at intervals he was relieved by Milot to whom M. Aubernon had given twenty francs.

After Benediction, the Vicar-General of the Bishopric had arrived, asking the parish priest to take him to

Magloire Dubourg. As they went along Abbé Choisy, still quite upset, narrated the miracles; then he mentioned the singular opinions which the Evangelist had expounded to him the day before.

"Possibly a power, possibly a danger," the Vicar-General murmured anxiously.

Before the King's Domain a close cordon had been drawn, but the priests were allowed to enter.

They crossed the plundered garden, skirted the park and entered the house. Abbé Choisy, dazzled, blinked his eyes as he entered the brilliantly-lighted drawing room. He did not recognise at the first glance all the people who were present; the Dubourgs had sent out a great many invitations. He advanced smiling, with bows to right and left.

"What a splendid day!" he said. . . . "What a triumph for religion!"

The Vicar-General interrupted him.

"I asked M. Choisy to bring me to you, Madame," he said, greeting Mme. Dubourg. "I was impatient to meet our great traveller."

The two men bowed and shook hands, the traveller, despite his stoop, still towering above the Bishop's envoy.

"Let us go out, shall we?" asked the latter.

The wide lawn was as smooth as sleeping water, and the rising moon laid timorous shadows across it. Noises came from everywhere in the quiet night air, and the joyous chirp of the grasshopper weighed as heavily on the silence as the lowing of the cattle which were being driven homewards. Far away on the market-place, young men were singing, and around their sonorous chant the shrill voice of a child seemed to gambol like a young dog at play. From the clear sky fell showers of stars.

The Vicar had plucked a tuft of anise, which he crushed between his fingers, inhaling its perfume. He hesitated to speak, for he was more moved than he wished to show.

"Sir, the Church already owes you a great deal, and will owe you still more in the future," he began at last. "To-day you have indeed achieved wonders, and we greet you as one of the most glorious of God's servants. It may be that you possess a superhuman power, in any case you have gained a magnificent ascendancy over the public, and it is great good fortune for the Faith to possess such a propagandist as you. . . . It is indeed above all to bid you welcome that I am paying you this visit, which is not official, but of which His Eminence is not unaware. You are a great Christian. . . ."

They had stopped in the middle of the path, where the gravel, white under the moon, ran between two grass banks. The Vicar-General communed with himself for a moment before proceeding. He smoothed his hair with a hand that was scented with anise.

"But all the same," he continued, weighing his words, "we thought that, in the interest of religion, which you have always served so wonderfully, you would yourself wish to give certain explanations to the ecclesiastical authorities. For instance, with regard to the marvellous cures of to-day. . . . You are well aware that they may benefit our cause, but also they might do it harm if we failed to act with the greatest discretion."

The saint looked closely at the young prelate.

"You doubt me, do you not?" he said gently.

The Vicar-General raised his head.

"Oh, no," he exclaimed with evident sincerity. "I admire you. But think of the responsibility we incur in acknowledging these cures as miracles. Even at Lourdes, where it is the Blessed Virgin who performs the cures, we ask the doctors to confirm them."

"Well," said the Evangelist, "you must still apply to them. I know nothing. . . . I saw these poor folks, I prayed for them; but if some of them have been healed it is to God alone that they owe it. I

did nothing; and I don't believe in the power of my poor wounded hands."

Magloire Dubourg was facing the evening light, his countenance was sweet and grave, two luminous points glowed within the hollow sockets of his eyes. The Vicar-General felt profoundly disturbed, and, taking the hands of the saint, he lifted them devoutly to his lips, to kiss the scars. The Evangelist hardly noticed the gesture.

"Have you put before the journalists the scheme which you confided to the White Fathers on your voyage?" asked the priest after a moment.

"No," said the Evangelist, "I wished to discuss it first with the Heads of the Church."

Then, standing still, he looked fixedly at the Vicar.

"But let me tell you, Monseigneur," he continued, "that nothing will prevent me from speaking the truths which have been revealed to me. The time has come to establish the law of God on earth, and no one has the right to impose silence on Him Who sends me."

The priest shivered.

"So you claim to speak in the name of God," he said distinctly, "but consider in what a formidable dilemma the Church will find itself. . . . We cannot, without injuring ourselves, disown a splendid man who has done so much for the Faith, a wonder-worker, almost a martyr; but, on the other hand, how are we to give free rein to a man who claims to hold from God a doctrine which reason and the Councils are at one in condemning?"

"I am not acquainted with the Councils, and my judgment is too frail for me to rely on it," replied the saint.

Putting his hand on the shoulder of the emissary, he made him sit down on the stone bench and himself sat down near him. A hidden nightingale was singing. The fir-trees threw their pointed foliage like a cloak over the nakedness of the night. At the end of the

garden, the lighted window of the drawing room made a golden splash, the colour of happiness. With bent brows Magloire Dubourg was calling up memories.

"I see again that corner of the Gabun forest," he murmured; "warm vapour rose from the moist ground; across the track a white-bellied spider had woven his web; and sticky creepers and lianas scented like jasmine, hung down in green cascades from the top of the great trees with their red trunks. . . . Fruit fell on the soft earth, with a dull thud. . . . I was alone, and yet I heard. . . . The voice was within me. . . ."

He was silent, then, after a pause :

"I know it now, we do not die. It is on earth that the soul lives and will live again unceasingly till the last Judgment. . . . Death releases us for a moment, then Life takes us up again and we are born once more, having forgotten everything. With a new purity and new hopes—to-day in the body of a rich man, to-morrow in the husk of a beggar. We return each time to the common fount of all souls, then we descend again, like a drop of water which evaporates and rises towards the clouds, to fall again in the guise of rain. The Divine afflatus which lives within us cannot have been born for only a single day; the Master said to Moses in the burning bush : 'God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living.' Life is eternal; we shall no more die than the rose-trees that are withered by the winter. Like them, we only change our corolla, and the ages of the world are the seasons of God. . . ."

The Vicar, overwhelmed, clasped his hands :

"But how can you possibly pretend . . .?" he urged.

"I do not pretend," the saint interrupted imperiously. "I affirm. This truth must save the world. We do not die ! We are bound for ever to the earth which God has given us, and the task of mankind is to reconstruct the earthly paradise which it has

destroyed. Then Christ will fall of His own will from all the crucifixes, for it will no longer be in vain that He died on the Cross. One single life is nothing; it will be by all our lives that we shall be judged. To suppose that God places man for just a few days in the midst of sensual pleasures, simply to tempt him, to drive him into sin, to judge him without appeal and make him pay for one second of error by an eternity of sufferings: that is sacrilege, and he who believes it is a blasphemer."

The Vicar-General recovered his self-control. His soul was ready to surrender, but his disciplined intelligence fought on.

"But you know that this belief is heretical," he cried in a trembling voice. "The texts are explicit. . . ."

"What do I care?" exclaimed Saint Magloire, sweeping away these objections with a gesture. "There is no truth but in the Gospel. For centuries human words have been added to the words of God, and it is impossible to find the truth under this pile of rubbish where good and bad are inextricably mixed together. We must scrape the walls of the Temple where every passer-by has written his own hypothesis. God has need of fervent hearts, not of doctrinaires."

The Vicar-General put up a desperate resistance. Tears stood in his eyes. He had taken the sunburnt hands of the saint between his own white ones, and he was still hoping to convince him.

"But at least," he implored, "think of the monstrous sin you are about to commit. You who are all faith and goodness, you will perhaps bring dissension into the Church, or at least group behind yourself some unhappy distracted souls who will pay for your visions in an eternity of suffering—you will deliver them to Hell."

The saint gazed at him with a shade of bitterness.

"Why must these words be always on your lips?" he asked sadly. "Always the promise of heaven, always the menace of burning. . . . I, you see,

would like to be able to destroy both Heaven and Hell, so that God might be loved for Himself. . . . You love God, but not as He should be loved. Christ spoke of nothing but goodwill, and you want to make Him reign by terror. . . . You who accuse me of heresy, you yourselves have created the most monstrous of all heresies by setting up an opposition in the hearts of men between the Son Whom they love and the Father Whom they fear. Every time that a son of the Church prays to a merciful Christ rather than to the wrathful God of Sinai, Whom you have transformed into an ogre, a crime is committed against the One and Only Creator, a crime for which you are responsible."

The Vicar bowed his head. His knitted brows ploughed two furrows in the middle of his pale forehead. A shudder shook the frame of the saint, and his voice changed.

"Forgive me" he said, bowing humbly before the priest and seizing his clasped hands. "I lose my temper; I threaten; my poor heart boils with such ardour that I am not able to master it. I repent, forgive me. . . ."

The Vicar-General without answering disengaged his right hand. In the darkness he traced a sign and laid his hand on the burning forehead of the saint.

"I pledge myself to obey you," said the Evangelist. "All that I can do without betraying my mission shall be done. What are your orders?"

"We cannot give you any orders," answered the Vicar, with a beating heart. "I only wanted to advise you to avoid all agitation, and also any premature statements. For this reason, the ecclesiastical authorities would be glad if you would make a short retreat in a religious house near Paris, where you will be able to have some useful interviews with certain people who are the only ones entitled to give you a hearing."

"Very well," said the saint, drawing himself up. "I will start at dawn."

Silence again fell between them. The priest no longer dared to put any questions. He felt the inexplicable glamour of the stately old man, and as he looked at him a weakness to which he was a stranger took possession of him. He no longer doubted. Against his own judgment he thought:

"He is a saint. . . ."

Magloire Dubourg looked into himself as though into a mirror and sought to read the future.

"Maybe, in trying to bring about the reign of justice, I shall unchain iniquity," he murmured, opening his eyes wider, as if seeing a vision. "It is right that it should be so. All human happiness is built on suffering: there is a Man on a Cross at the entrance to the City of God. Joy will be born when the time of trial has passed. The selfishness of man has turned this world into a hell, but goodwill and kindness will show the way back to our lost Paradise. Eden is still here, God has not taken away its docile animals, its abundant fruits, nor any of its riches: it is for us to reopen the closed portals."

It seemed as if, in the limpid night, the stars were waking—weary of their long stillness, they tore themselves from the skies and, at any moment, they could be seen dropping, in a rapid golden curve. Lost wishes. . . .

"Do you see those shooting stars?" asked the saint. "Our eyes follow them but for an instant, and nevertheless they wend their way, through days and nights and centuries, in sombre wanderings. Likewise, out of his whole eternal life man only sees his present span, the fleeting moment when the star is shining. . . ."

The moon, gliding between the branches of the lime-trees whose perfume mingled with her rays, illumined the crossed hands of the saint and his transfigured countenance. Gradually, a smile parted his bearded lips.

"I see," he murmured. "I see. . . . Like Him,

I shall fall beneath the weight of my cross and shall not rise, but others following will carry it after me, and a day will come when the redeemed world will laugh under the Eye of God. Human creatures will love each other, knowing henceforth that they are brothers, and the weak will no longer envy the strong, knowing that the human husk may be assumed and cast off like a garment. Christ made the promise, but none will listen: 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth! It is the earth that He gave us, the earth, the fruitful Mother, our first thrill of consciousness, our last sleep, eternal companion of the dead. . . ."

He stooped a little and, with bent head, seemed to watch the bright light of the moon which bathed his feet.

"I see," he continued in a still lower voice, as if lost in ecstasy. . . . "My freed soul will float in space, cradled by the winds, waiting to live anew until the memory of man, by forgetting it, has set it free. Then I shall be born again. . . . The truth I have proclaimed will have borne fruit. The world will be better and I shall not know that I have made it so; I shall be without pride, a humble servant. . . . Nevertheless, from the obscure depths of past lives, strange memories will arise. I shall pause, my mind far away, leaning on my pickaxe or my desk—which-ever Fate has given me—and I shall dream. I shall seem to be wandering through fabulous regions, I shall imagine adventures, depict to myself strange unknown countries, and, without realising it, I shall have returned in dreams, with my helmet on my head and my machete at my side, to the banks of the Tchad where the sirens swim."

CHAPTER V

MAGLOIRE DUBOURG had arrived at Source Joséphine the day after the events at Barlincourt, having been discreetly conducted thither by a Canon from Beauvais. The house, a place of retreat where priests who are being transferred await their new appointments and tired missionaries recoup their strength, stands on the slopes of Saint Cucufa. The Evangelist had met several Fathers there whom he had known in Africa.

Seated on the edge of the rose-hued fountain, which was full of the gentle murmur of running water, he spent whole hours chatting with Father Labry, whose shattered form flitted about in a cassock with seams worn white.

In his quavering voice, the old missionary brought back to him recollections of the dark country; and sang as he clapped his hands :

Ia, ia, Kakinde
Allah, Toubabou Kakindé.

Magloire Dubourg interrupted him with his sonorous laugh :

"Yes, yes, I remember, it was the evening I arrived at Fort Roussel; I can still see the women twisting themselves about and the three musicians shaking their baskets of shells. It was the year poor Father Debroux died."

"I made you eat roast iguana, do you remember? At that time I used to think it tasted of rabbit; now, when they give me rabbit it tastes of lizard. Ah, thirty years of Africa do change a man. . . . I wonder if I should not have done better to die out

there. . . . What about you, do you not regret anything?"

Magloire Dubourg grew serious again.

"I had others to convert here," he murmured.

His retreat at Source Joséphine was known only to the archbishop, possibly even the police did not know of it. The reporters sent out to hunt for him had not been able to get on his trail; any conjectures as to his whereabouts were possible. The popular report was that the saint had made himself invisible and that he would soon reappear and perform more miracles.

The healings at Barlincourt had caused widespread sensation; the whole world had been struck with amazement. That day of wonders staggered the intellect.

After a few days, however, the saint having disappeared, people recovered their balance and discussed the matter. Since there was nothing more of interest to be got out of the six miraculously healed people, who had been interviewed, examined by specialists and photographed in every attitude, the newspapers had begun to make inquiries of the scientists, the prelates, even of certain spiritualists. Some declared enthusiastically for the miracles, others denied them *in toto*, but the majority were half inclined to believe, attributing the cures generally to the neuropathic condition of the patients and to the magnetic power of the Evangelist, aided still further by the atmosphere of an unprecedented demonstration. They made comparisons with Lourdes, and recalled the case of the zouave Jacob. Professor Malex, the youngest member of the Academy of Medicine, who was said to be an atheist, pointed out that cures were all effected on extremely impressionable subjects: a feeble-minded man suffering from St. Vitus' dance; a little girl whose hip-disease could only have been of nervous origin; a woman suffering more or less from religious mania, who had been stricken with hemiplegia after an attack

of apoplexy; a very young girl who had been treated for chronic myelitis, and another woman whom ten physicians had treated in vain for a gastritis alleged to be cancerous, but which in no way revealed itself on clinical examination.

There still remained the blind man, but the professor did not refer to him. The partisans of the miracles, by way of retaliation, talked more of him than of anyone else. One fact was certain; he had been blind, in receipt of State assistance as a helpless person; and since the miracle he had been able to see. The *Français* had published a facsimile of the declaration signed by the doctor at the Quinze-Vingts Hospital, who acknowledged that he had treated the said Joseph Grignard (not Barnabas), afflicted with almost total blindness, following on glaucoma, and they had added to this document the medical note drawn up eighteen months previously, in which all the symptoms were given: obnubilations, excavation of the optic pupils, greyish tint at the back of the eye, inability to bear the light. This time it was a clear case of a miracle.

The journalists, who were holding on to their blind man, had harassed him in vain with questions, meanly trying to make him contradict himself: his story had never varied. They followed the poor devil in a pitiless procession, their ears always on the alert; they trotted him about Paris, they took him, still dressed in rags, to the big restaurants; they made him drink, and when he was recognised by the crowd, demonstrations broke out from which he came away stupefied, haggard, and with new rents in his moth-eaten coat. But, even at such moments as these, they could not drag out of him the smallest contradiction; there was no ground whatever for suspecting a trick, and it was absolutely certain that before the miracle he had not been near the saint, nor even heard of him.

A morning paper had published his "Impressions," paid for at five francs a line; a rival had bought the

"Memoirs" of the Barlincourt epileptic, who was, by the way, incapable of writing a word or even of articulating a sentence. Since the epileptic's cure, Milot had acted as his impressario; and the two men, being treated continually by the idlers whom the trains brought in coachfuls to Barlincourt, were never sober.

Among the general public, no one troubled about all these controversies. They saw but one thing: sick people had been suddenly healed; and if all the doctors were trying to deny it, that was only because they themselves were unable to do likewise. In the cinemas, when the silhouette of the saint appeared on the screen, the whole theatre applauded. The ecclesiastical authorities were becoming anxious about this growing popularity, for it augured a dangerous excitement, as soon as the saint should begin to preach his doctrine.

Already the *Osservatore Romano*, the mouthpiece of the Holy See, had skilfully denied that a Council was to be assembled with instructions to inquire into the great deeds of Magloire Dubourg and to prepare for his canonisation. The pontifical organ showered praises on the illustrious traveller, and simply wound up by reminding its readers that article 2101 of Canon Law specified that a cause for canonisation could only be introduced fifty years after the death of the servant of God.

"La Croix," yet more circumspect, contented itself with an ambiguous note stating that the town of Dol would celebrate on the 24th October the feast of St. Magloire, who preached the Gospel in the fifth century. It was a roundabout method of pointing out that in the Calendar of Saints the place was already filled. The clerical organ employed the most unexpected metaphors in referring to Magloire Dubourg, desiring to avoid calling him curtly monsieur, but still less willing to call him saint. The other newspapers generally commented sharply on this singular attitude, and M. François Dubourg had induced the *Français* to

print a paragraph in which the acts of the holy Abbé of Dol and those of the Evangelist were placed side by side. The comparison was not to the advantage of the Breton hermit.

The novelist, since the miracles had taken place, was no longer the same man. He overflowed with pride; his photograph had appeared everywhere, and there was not a soul in France who had not heard of the villa of Barlincourt. Everything, moreover, had combined to turn his head: the urgency of the papers, who were ordering stories from him at double rates, the respect of his colleagues, the curiosity of the Barlincourt people, who now stood still to watch him pass, and the huge correspondence that reached him. At last, indeed, he tasted fame.

The King's Domain was constantly full of guests. People were proud to be invited to the saint's house. The Aubernons had become more constant visitors than ever, and M. Dubourg, who had at one time waited with some impatience for the manufacturer to ask him to give Yvonne's hand to his son, now made not the slightest advance. He was biding his time.

Upset by these occurrences the little town could not recover its balance. At the factory, the workmen took a day off on any trifling excuse; the youngsters played truant from school, the housewives chattered continually instead of attending to their duties, and discussions even went on in the fields, while the horses neighed with impatience. Never had the country roads seen so many people. The Mayor lay awake at night, fearful of fresh disturbances, but hoping for new miracles; and, vanity having vanquished fear, he had on his own initiative asked the Northern Railway Company to run excursion trains.

Several times the police had been obliged to intervene and clear the King's Domain, where the mob, hoping to catch a glimpse of the saint, invaded the park; and on Sundays, the days of greater crowds, the Dubourgs lived in a state of siege,

flattered and anxious at the same time. They got news of the Evangelist from M. Van den Kris, who often went over to Source Joséphine. It was known, too, that Magloire Dubourg had received a visit from an emissary of the Archbishop, with whom he had remained behind locked doors for two whole afternoons.

This priest had questioned him closely on points of doctrine, apparently following out an interrogatory prepared beforehand. From the first he had been astonished that the missionaries, among whom the Evangelist had lived for so many years, had never been alarmed by his dangerous beliefs.

"We worshipped God and we loved mankind," Saint Magloire had replied, "and our discussions went no further than that."

The ideas of this visitor from Africa, which at first made him smile, had soon disturbed him.

The second day he listened to the saint without discussion, quivering, vanquished. After that he was not seen again. . . . Without warning, or explanation, he failed to return.

Two days later, another ecclesiastic presented himself, a fat Monsignor, with haughty manners, who spoke with a strong Roman accent. Upon this man the power of the Evangelist had no effect; he never looked the saint in the face and hardly listened to him, preoccupied with the answer he was going to make. It was a sophistical discussion, which Magloire Dubourg was often unable to understand. With bowed head, his plump hands slipped into his sash, the Monsignor replied to everything by texts, decisions of Councils and quotations from the Fathers of the Church.

"No," he said in a mellifluous voice, "these ideas are senseless. . . . They would make you ridiculous and would do harm to religion. . . . A Christian of your standing cannot defend the doctrine of the Pharisees."

When the old man cried his faith aloud, seeking to

convince him, he interrupted him at once, sawing the air with his short arms.

"Please do not let us dispute about it," he lisped. "The spirit of investigation is an impious spirit. The dogma is there: Carpocrates and Basilides were declared heretics for having upheld the same theories. . . . You see you have discovered nothing new."

Then, with a smile he added in a tone of forbearance:

"Believe me, you must give it up."

Magloire Dubourg, however, refused to relinquish the struggle, and his thrusts never failed in their effect upon the prelate. At last the latter grew irritable, and, without meaning to do so, lent himself to controversy.

"Your suppositions have no foundation," he said angrily. "It is heresy at every step. Thus, if you admit this perpetual reincarnation, when will the souls of men be judged?"

"At the Last Judgment, the only one of which Jesus spoke."

The Monsignor eluded him:

"Pardon me, you must know that dogma accepts two judgments: a special Judgment, immediately after death, and the universal Judgment, which will be but the solemn promulgation of the earlier . . . I will quote the two meditations of St. Ignatius in his Exercises and. . . ."

Now came the turn of Magloire to interrupt.

"You know too much, Monsignor," he said in his veiled voice. "He who does not conceive the Kingdom of God like a little child shall not enter into it."

The face of the Italian twitched angrily.

"And I," he said furiously, "I answer you: "Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh. . . ." By what right do you pretend to be a Catholic, since you rebel against the essential principles of religion? By what right do you sift all the sacred writings, the decisions of twenty Councils, in the net of your judgment? The only true Church is the codified, reasoned

Church, not the pure doctrine of Christ where everything consists of symbols unfathomable for simple minds. . . . I admire you, sir, and yet I pity you, for in order to wreck your sublime qualities the spirit of evil has instilled doubt and curiosity into you. You have forgotten the great motto which should guide us all: 'Outside the Church, no salvation.'"

The saint, with set countenance, remained impassive, and suddenly the prelate felt anxious. He regretted that he had allowed himself to be carried away. A rupture with Magloire Dubourg would re-echo round the world, and it was precisely to avoid any such scandal that he had come. He changed his tone abruptly and bowed his head before the old man with a respect which was not altogether feigned.

"Sooner or later you will recant these reprehensible errors," he said; "but promise me, promise the ecclesiastical authorities whom I represent, that you will provoke no scandal, that you will attempt nothing which might be of service to the enemies of the Church."

The saint looked at him, trying to read the truth in his insincere eyes. Then he replied:

"I promise you that I will always fight against the enemies of God."

As he went out, the Italian talked for a moment with the Superior of the establishment and a young priest of the Catholic Institute, who walked with him to his motor-car.

"What a pity," he murmured, "to have so great a heart and so pernicious an intellect!"

And he entered his car with a discreet blessing, which the director and the young priest received with heads bowed religiously, but with their minds on other things, for they had been so often blessed.

This interview had at once become known throughout the whole establishment, and the disturbance caused by the saint's arrival only increased.

With the exception of the Colonials, who already

knew him, the other boarders felt themselves embarrassed in the presence of Magloire Dubourg. They were caught between the fascination which he exercised over everyone, and an inexplicable fear. As soon as anyone ventured to disagree with him, the Evangelist adopted an authoritative tone which broke down all resistance. He would have liked to force his beliefs, his sentiments, even his unparalleled goodness, on everyone alike. The least injustice shocked him. Thus, on the first day, he had been annoyed to see that the servants did not take their meals at the common table.

"Ought we not to set an example of simplicity?" he had asked the Superior. "Why two tables? We must not despise those who serve us; if they perform degrading tasks we degrade ourselves still more by ordering them to do so."

This unnecessary tirade made no change in the customs of the house, but all the boarders were annoyed by it, and the servants even more so.

"Oh, that's a bit too much of a good thing," exclaimed the gardener, who always felt that he was being spied on from the windows as he lazily raked the paths. "They might at least let us eat our dinner in peace!"

In the midst of the Fathers, Magloire led a separate existence. Since all ostentation was detestable to him, he even hid himself at times of prayer, and often missed a service while he meditated in the leafy garden, before the marble Neptune with the ivy-bound limbs.

Assisted by Father Labry, he had constructed a beehive at the end of the kitchen-garden, and everyone was surprised to see him playing with the bees, making them roll inertly in his hands, without ever being stung. Only the gardener was not astonished, for he could do as much himself; only, where he came from nobody wondered at it.

No one, then, dared to resist the Saint. However, on the day of the visit of the Monsignor, the young

priest from the Catholic Institute, made irritable by ill-health, refused to go and apologise to the porter whom he had just treated discourteously. The eyes of the Evangelist blazed.

"I command you in the name of holy obedience," he cried. Unconsciously, he had used the very words which Francis of Assisi spoke to his saintly companions. As he had risen, the sleeping bees in the folds of his mantle flew away with a *pizzicato* and buzzed around him; a ray of sunlight silvered his white locks, the wounds in his hands showed their two stigmata, and the vanquished priest suddenly thought that he beheld the preacher of the birds commanding brother Masseo, in the gardens of Spoleto. . . . Then he bowed his head, and submissive, moved away. . . .

M. Van den Kris came that morning at a smart pace up the Avenue Ducis, which leads to Source Joséphine, and to urge himself along he whistled the refrain of the "Sidi Brahim," for martial music, limited strictly to the regimental drum and fife, was the only sort that he approved of.

Coming along in the tram he had read all the papers that referred to the rebellion on the Ivory Coast, which was assuming the proportions of a genuine Holy War; and as he walked up the Avenue, with his straw hat in his hand, he imagined himself commanding a punitive column under orders to relieve Singrobo. He always dreamed these daring dreams when he was out walking. Whether his pace was slow or rapid depended on the nature of his thoughts. If he were holding a palaver at the entrance of a village, or if he were keeping watch over a sleeping camp, he tripped along quite softly with the air of a gentleman at large who was out for a stroll; then suddenly he might be seen hastening his steps, setting off at full speed. That was because his detachment had just fallen into an ambush, or because the charge was being sounded under the palms. He

must have charged a number of times since he alighted from the tram, for he was perspiring profusely as he entered the door of the House of Retreat. When he came into the garden he put away his dream, as one closes a book, with a leaf turned down.

"I have brought you the Paris papers," said he to the missionaries; "things are getting worse in Africa."

"Yes, we saw that," muttered Father Labry, who had as great a love for the negroes as Saint Magloire. "It is a nice business. . . ."

"Come, the Senegalese are in the right," said another, who was seated on the edge of the rose-coloured pool. "The whites out there are like locusts."

"Poor devils," continued Father Labry. . . . "I ought not to have left. One might perhaps have been able to do something. . . . They'll send detachments, of course, kill still more men, burn some villages, but we shan't be any better off at the end of it. . . . They will only detest us a little more, that's all. . . . Oh, I am sorry for the Fathers who will be sent out there now."

"Hallo," another missionary, a tall bearded youth with a limp, said maliciously, "here is Grandpapa defending his savages again."

"Savages!" flared up the old Father. "Less so than we are. . . . Now you just compare the wine-merchants here with those out there. . . ."

The whole group began to laugh uproariously.

"Ah, he confesses that he goes to the café. . . . We shall have them bringing him home screwed. . . ."

"Why, certainly, I go and chat there, and I drink a little; it's my way of making conversions. Well, suppose a publican here were never at his counter and left his customers to help themselves, do you think many of them would pay? Not one, I am certain. I know them, the scamps. And the last of them would most likely empty the till. . . . Whereas in Baoulé I never saw anyone in charge of the huts where

they sell samba. The man is out harvesting in the palm-groves, and when the porters have had a good drink, everyone of them puts what he owes into the bag that hangs at the door. And it is people like that whom you want to civilise at the point of the bayonet. . . . But they are worth more than you. . . .”

M. Van den Kris, who despised negroes, kept his lips tightly closed. Neither did Magloire Dubourg take part in the discussion. He seemed more careworn than usual. Seated apart from the others, he was looking at the papers. They were less concerned with his doings this morning; the negro revolt filled all the front pages and a stop-press column as well.

The disturbances had begun in the Kong country, usually one of the most peaceful in the Upper Ivory Coast. For some months an alarming agitation had been noticed along the edge of the Comoë, that mysterious river which winds through the Great Forest and whose banks are still unexplored. The natives complained of having been raided repeatedly without the troops at the stations having done anything to protect them, and, since that time, they had become discouraged and had not started to work again. When the assistant officials for native affairs appeared at the villages to collect the taxes, they were received with a hail of stones.

Troops were then sent with orders not so much to punish the rebels as to frighten them, but, instead of pacifying the district, they themselves, on the contrary, let loose rebellion. Indeed, since the commanding officers had not sufficient forces at their disposal, they had, on the way through, recruited adherents, chosen from among the most warlike tribes—triple-scarred bambaras and baoules with long flintlocks—with the result that the plundered villages thought the same bands who had already raided them were returning, but this time under orders of the white men.

At this injustice, the negroes rose in revolt. In a

few days the whole Kong country was in rebellion. In proportion as the troops advanced, the insurrection, mysteriously organised, grew in front of them. Losses soon became so heavy that they were obliged to fall back on the stations. This retreat emboldened the negroes; those who were still hesitating joined the movement, and the Government was at last obliged to acknowledge the facts: the whole colony was in revolt, from the Gulf of Guinea to the Sudan.

It was the most serious rebellion the colony had ever experienced. The whole population had taken arms, without any distinction of races, from the fetish-worshipping Mandingues to the Mohammedan Peuhls; the native auxiliary forces were deserting the French troops and returning to their own tribes, with rifles and cartridges; the authorities no longer dared to send detachments into the equatorial forest, since all the villages in the clearings had risen; and the French soldiers were being attacked up to the very gates of Bingerville.

In order to impress on their readers the gravity of this revolt, the newspapers published a map of France opposite to one of the rebellious districts, from Ashanti to the Niger: the two were precisely the same size. To put down the revolt, the French troops were now obliged to march for whole months together, coming from Guinea or Senegal, or else, disemarking at Grand-Bassam, to cross two hundred miles of virgin forest; that huge moist forest, full of shadows, whose eternally green foliage only dies as it reaches the coast lagoons.

Most of the newspapers spoke of Saint Magloire in connection with the negro rebellion and regretted that they were unable to find out his views, for he was better acquainted than anyone else with the tribes which had revolted. The *Cri Public* went still further:

"People will not fail to see a connection," it said, "between this sudden insurrection, which has obviously been prepared beforehand, and the unexpected

return of Magloire Dubourg to France. Some may even wonder whether the famous traveller, knowing what was about to happen, has not come here as ambassador for the negroes, to negotiate with the French Government."

Father Labry, to whom the saint showed this passage, began to laugh and pull his beard.

"That's a good joke," he exclaimed. "Here you are, a full-blown Ambassador for the negroes. . . ."

Paris was excited. So long as the disturbances in Africa had been limited to village insurrections, the public had taken little heed of them. People carelessly read the first casualty lists, almost all from the Senegalese Rifles: Diara, Foutabe, Ibrahim N'Daye, Moussa: savages, in fact. . . .

Men did not worry, knowing that they would not be called up for this war. Women did not even look at the dispatches; they read nothing but the articles of the saint. It was all too far away, the danger could never cross the seas. . . .

But, after the morning news, came a sudden revulsion of feeling. Each paper printed across two columns a little paragraph in italics, under the headline "Communiqué," and that word alone sufficed to make the public realise the situation. They remembered. . . . "Again!" They seemed to scent Death . . . they thought of long-drawn-out agonies in the underbrush where wild beasts prowled; of the boys who would leave home and never return. War: they knew what that meant, since 1914. . . .

In big headlines, the *Français* summed up the opinion of the working classes. "Not a man! Not a penny!" But the leading papers demanded the sternest repression of the revolt. *Le Jour*, which liked laconic formulas and ideas put into figures of speech, had published under the title of "The Black Granary" a sort of diagram in which was shown a pile of bales of various sizes: coffee, cereals, spices, sugar,

rice; and *Le Jour* reckoned that, rather than deprive herself of all these supplies, generous France would surely sacrifice a few more soldiers. The same paper pointed out elsewhere that it was a question of special troops, professional soldiers, legionaries, natives, a few battalions of colonials made up of hot-heads; and that, after all, the only use for such soldiers as these was to make war and, if necessary, to die on the field. Several retired Governors, the wife of an explorer, and two Colonial generals had been interviewed, and all expressed the view that reprisals were necessary. True, there was still the opinion of the soldiers to be considered, but no one thought of that. Still less of the opinion of the negroes.

On the boulevards, where the newspapers posted up their latest telegrams, the crowds hung about, restless and noisy, but, with the exception of a band of students, who were quickly dispersed by the police, there had been no breach of the peace.

In the afternoon, outside the Chamber of Deputies, the few idlers who were watching at the railings were all detectives. People walked by, indifferent. But in the interior of the Palace, in the corridors, in the Salle des Pas Perdus, in the refreshment room, there was the same hubbub that may be heard on the day of a great debate. Those who wanted to find peace had to seek it in the Chamber itself.

A few assiduous old deputies, of whom nothing could be seen from the galleries but their bald and shining heads, were carrying on their correspondence, deaf to everything around them. Some were reading. Others were chatting in small groups.

All alone on the Government bench sat a fat man, who was wagging his head and playing mechanically with a paper knife. From time to time, a voice on the rostrum interrupted its mutterings to say: "Passed," then went on with its reading. No one could have told what subject was under discussion.

Deputies came and went. Ushers, who looked like

beadles with their silver chains, brought in news from the outside. A famous politician came in with a rush, as a singer comes to look at the house before the curtain goes up; he shook hands with a few people and went out again after a look at the galleries. The old men went on writing. It was the atmosphere of a business agency, of a college and an Assize Court combined.

The public galleries were already crowded when the Chamber began to fill up. The deputies arrived in twos and threes and went to their seats. Someone was then seen to cross the semicircle, with a dossier under his arm, and run lightly up the steps of the tribune. There arose a burst of laughter from all the benches. On several sides came cries of:

"Bouicard! Bravo, Bouicard! . . ."

The ushers, too, had pricked up their ears and looked merrily at the orator. This Bouicard, who had no special claim to celebrity, was one of the butts of the Palais Bourbon, and no matter how grave the discussion, he had only to open his lips for the House to relax. Though he was considered stupid, he was well liked.

The burlesque adventures and absurd sayings attributed to him by the newspapers, far from injuring him, had ended by making his reputation. He was loyal to every Government in turn as long as it retained its power, and he never voted except with the majority. On this occasion, also, he was to speak by order, simply to fill the rostrum till the arrival of the Ministers.

Amid the buzz, he could be heard beginning his speech. It was his everlasting project for the Mediterranean-Atlantic Canal. Some of the deputies, already irritable, grew angry.

"Get on! get on!" they shouted. "The thing is a farce. . . ."

Then, on a sudden, came silence. A group of deputies swept in, like a black flood, and scattered

through the gangways. The Ministerial benches filled up in a trice. The atmosphere had changed completely.

A long ovation rose from the hall: four hundred deputies, standing, welcomed the President of the Council, who had just arrived. He could be seen walking with a slight stoop, and a somewhat surly expression. He acknowledged the welcome with a nod and went to his seat, shaking the hands outstretched to him.

When order was restored, the deputy who was to put a question to the Government, and had come in just before to gauge the temper of the House, mounted the rostrum.

"He is upset," said the habitués.

"Gentlemen . . . At this moment, when in distant lands for which we have already paid with our blood, young French lives are to be offered up . . ."

He spoke in a warm, supple voice that caressed the words, a voice which was more seductive than convincing. The public whispered its admiration.

The periods succeeded each other, moving and empty, with "Hear, hears" at the end. Fine imagery:

"Little Turcos lying in the great plains, their cold cheeks fondled by the wind that blows from France. . . . We have taught the peoples, who yesterday were still in slavery, that all chains fall away where our armies have passed. . . . If the olive branch has failed in its message to the Sudanese desert, whither we had carried it with such infinite pains, it is not the Republic who can be blamed. . . ."

The Right and the Centre applauded unceasingly. Then suddenly the speaker changed his method, as a boxer changes his guard. His voice trembled.

"That admirable working class, which came back, bled white, with empty hands, from five years of war. . . ."

Then, forgetting old grudges, the Left in its turn applauded frantically. Little by little, the orator unmasked his batteries. Undoubtedly it would be necessary to intervene; France could not without shame abandon one acre of her Colonial Empire. But was this Government, whom the Allies of yesterday already regarded with distrust, quite sure that it could avoid giving offence, if it attempted an operation which was indeed necessary, but perhaps required more delicate handling?

And then—the attack.

“I know—and there are some of us in this assembly who are already alarmed thereat—that the Government has vaster ambitions, other ends in view than the pacification of the rebellious regions; and I ask myself, with a shudder, whether a country which has left fifteen hundred thousand dead . . .”

The murmur became a roar. The whole Chamber sprang to its feet, applause and hisses mingled; five hundred men stared aghast at Minister and Orator.

In the yellow light which fell from the cupola the great mass of men could be seen whirling about, and bodies with waving arms seemed to shout words that were lost in the tumult.

All eyes were turned towards the President of the Council, who had risen.

“Speech,” they called.

He seemed to hesitate. Then he mounted the rostrum. Not a note in his hand: all eyes noticed that fact. And at once, without preparation or beating about the bush, he replied.

As far as the repression of disturbances was concerned, all discussion was superfluous; it was a necessity. A solitary voice from the socialist benches cried out “No,” but it was drowned at once by hisses.

There remained only the question of intervention by neighbouring Powers. France had secured complete liberty of action in Liberia. By way of compensation she was to leave England a free hand to carry on her

police operations in Ethiopia, and was to give carte blanche to the United States if they should think fit to "keep a close watch" on the internal affairs of Mexico.

The majority, reconquered, applauded to the echo, but some exclamations were mingled with the cheers. Scraps of phrases could be heard: "Greater France. . . . A human reservoir. . . . Unexploited wealth. . . ." Then the voice was drowned in uproar. The Socialists descended, vociferating, from their benches.

"Not a man!" they cried.

From the Right, deputies rushed towards them, shaking their fists in their opponents' faces, regardless of the ushers who threw themselves into the fray. Cries of "Long live France!" and "Down with War!" were flung back and forth. A Communist, gesticulating at the foot of the rostrum, apostrophised the President, his clamouring swamped by the racket.

"Shameful haggling!" he yelled, with crimson cheeks.

"So that's your Republic!" bawled a little man with long hair on the Right.

The President, leaning forward, rapped out calls to order, which no one heard, and vainly rang his bell. The seething mass continued to rave.

The President of the Council, however, did not leave the rostrum, and when the noise subsided he took up his speech again at the same point and the same word. There was silence; the fever had subsided, the voices were exhausted.

Besides, they wanted information. A statement of the plan of campaign followed. Absolute stillness now reigned while the President of the Council was speaking; the contrast, after the storm, was almost tragic. The crowd was panting: all glances, all thoughts converged on him, drinking in his words. A thousand invisible rays must have pierced him.

"Who, then, would dare to leave unburied

those who died on the Upper Coast? Who would leave unavenged the defenders of Seguela? Our Duty . . .”

At this moment, unexpected as a thunder-clap, a deep voice rang out from the galleries :

“Silence !”

The Minister, startled, raised his head, his mouth open, and very pale.

“I command you to be silent. . . .”

With one accord the astounded deputies whipped round. All eyes sought the man who had spoken. People hustled each other in the galleries, leaning over to get a better view. The President must have shouted something, for the ushers came up quickly. There was a wild uproar. . . .

“It is never the duty of men to kill. To wipe out blood, you are going to spill blood. You hand over slaves to predatory tribes as you would sell cattle to a dealer. . . .”

All over the Chamber people were shouting. Round the man himself, a jostling crowd, overturned benches. . . .

“What you are bartering in this market-booth of yours is the blood and sweat of others. It is the suffering of the negroes whom you are loading with chains, it is the life of the boys you are butchering to pay for your conquests. . . . Blood, always blood !”

Then they saw him. . . . His long outstretched arm cursed the assembly. Everyone intuitively recognised Magloire Dubourg. The common-place photographs in the papers had not given any idea of the bronzed skin, the blazing eyes, the whole luminous visage, but everyone understood at once that it was he. A murmur rose from the amphitheatre, where all the deputies had sprung to their feet, but no one as yet dared to interrupt. A supernatural fear suffocated them. Women, in the galleries, stared at him, haggard, their hands pressed to their lips. A youth had flung himself on the saint, but stopped in the ac-

of touching him, and drew back not daring. . . . Father Labry, stupefied, looked at his old friend without moving. And Magloire went on speaking, pouring his anathema, crying his horror aloud :

"You have paid for your territories with dead enough to cover them to the last acre with a harvest of corpses. . . . God gave you life that you might love, and you talk of nothing but hate; He intended you for happiness and you have set up misery; He gave you a paradise on earth and you fight over it with snapping jaws like vicious dogs snarling over a bone. . . . Shame on you, if you spill the blood of the negroes! It is you who are the barbarians. . . . My African savages, in centuries of war, could not have raised that pyramid of ten million corpses which still spreads over Europe the testimony of its putrefaction. . . ."

The hostile murmur from below was growing in volume. Each word cut them like the lash of a riding-whip. People were hooting. . . . From the galleries, there was nothing to be seen now but a crowd of evil faces and clenched fists. Threats rose on all sides.

"Put him out! . . . That's enough! . . . the man's mad! . . ."

Father Labry had seized Magloire Dubourg by the arm and was imploring him, with quivering lips. But the saint, pushing him aside, went on speaking, and his powerful voice fought the clamour as a boar shakes the hounds that have seized it.

"Not a crucifix on your walls!" thundered the prophetic voice. . . . "He judged you from His Cross, you prating hucksters! . . . How many among you will set out for the conquest of these countries that you are putting in chains? I swear to you, you will pay in tears for all the blood that will be shed. . . . The day will come when you, too, will be weak, the day will come when you, too, will be poor, the day will come when you will no longer be

the boot that crushes, but the gasping thing that moans beneath its weight. . . . Pray for yourselves, fine talkers without a conscience, to-morrow will be the ransom of to-day. . . ."

The corridors were jammed with ushers, deputies, idlers, journalists, who with cries of "Where is he? Where is he?" rushed up the staircase, to be swallowed in the crowd above. In the Chamber the deputies were massed like a flock of sheep. Elbow to elbow, the close proximity was restoring their courage. They were all shouting at once to drown his voice. Parties and rivalries had disappeared: their hoarse throats all bellowed the same insults. As the saint, with a deep sigh, paused for breath, the President of the Council attempted to reply. His voice quavered:

"I implore my colleagues to pay no attention to the rambl . . ."

Saint Magloire stopped him again, imperious:

"Be silent!"

And the stunned crowd obeyed, white-faced.

"Do you not feel that Death has already hold of you, ambitious old man? The last sarcasm you utter will kill you, like the last sting of a hornet. . . . What are you all doing, you parasites, in these places which you have stolen by promises. . . ."

The door of the gallery slammed violently, and ten men flung themselves in a *mêlée* on the saint. They could be seen from below, and with a spontaneous shout the Chamber applauded them. It was a cry of triumph, one great laugh of relief. Thank God! they were dragging him away. . . . The public galleries disgorged their occupants in a terrible din. The deputies, too, sprang towards the door, but the tinkle of a bell held them back.

"Gentlemen," cried the President theatrically, "the session will continue."

The French windows of the Salon des Quatre-Colonnes were open to the garden. Seated in a red

arm-chair with gilded arms, the President of the Council, still exhausted, was thanking his friends with feeble handshakes. After leaving the rostrum, he had felt faint.

"It was so hot, was it not?" he explained, embarrassed. "And then I had been up so late. . . ."

"You are overworking, M. le President. . . ."

The speaker had been among the first to come and congratulate him, and they stood for a moment shaking hands effusively, silent and profoundly moved. In the corners, in little animated groups, people were talking.

"They took him back to Rueil directly the Police had questioned him."

"That was the best thing they could do."

"He's quite mad."

"If they had arrested him they would only have made people sympathise with him."

"Do you know this place, Source Joséphine?"

On being asked this question, a deputy in a cassock answered with a pained expression :

"Yes, a most respectable establishment. The poor people there will be distressed. . . . The best thing for them would be to get rid of him as quickly as possible."

Elsewhere, a socialist was justifying himself desperately :

"Certainly we are against any Colonial expedition. On that subject we are in absolute disagreement with the Government, but I hope that no one imagines we approve of such a gross diatribe as that."

His opponents politely reassured him.

"My dear fellow, how could you believe. . . ."

The President, tired out, closed his eyes. Round about him, phrases were still buzzing.

"Economic greatness. . . . Colonial Empire. . . . Insulted flag."

And as he fell asleep, he seemed to be driving them

away, with the tips of his fingers, as one flicks away September flies.

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From his carriage, Saint Magloire, driving along the Seine, caught sight of a regiment, halting for rest. With a hand that still shook, he crossed himself.

The soldiers had piled arms all along the pavement. War kit, with helmets. Passers-by came running up to get a better view of them.

"They are Colonials going off to Africa."

The foot-soldiers had come from the Fort of Vanves and were to entrain at the Gare de Lyon. They might have been taken for a noisy school-class at recreation time. They were romping, with resounding friendly smacks, laughing, calling to each other. The long journey intoxicated them; they already felt themselves different from the others: matured by adventure. They looked at the people with a bantering air, a slight contempt. Those who had spent the night weeping on their straw mattresses were joking like their pals.

"*Au revoir*, chickabiddies! We are off to monkey-land."

The idlers slipped into the ranks of the soldiers, distributing cigarettes and money. For that one day, the officers winked at everything. Seated, with swinging legs, on the parapet, some veterans, sunburnt and bemedalled, were emptying their cans.

A little apart, a beardless youth, with pale cheeks, was talking to a woman.

"Mother, mother!"

Shyly, he held her by the elbow, not daring to take her in his arms before so many people. She was weeping; stifling her sobs with her handkerchief; a continuous moan rose to her lips, and through the tears which dimmed her eyes she gazed at him savagely, with all her soul, as though she thought to take him, absorb him, keep him living in her heart.

Her boots and her skirt were white with dust. From

Vanves she had followed the soldiers on foot, without feeling the fatigue. She could have wished this Via Dolorosa to go on for ever, that she might at least have her boy before her eyes, and be there to defend him. She would follow him to the end, to the very last glance, to the final echo of the train. If it was to be for the last time . . .

Her thin back shook with sobs.

"Do not cry, mother! . . ."

With her handkerchief to her lips, she devoured him with her eyes. A horrible vision haunted her. She seemed to see, beneath that white girlish skin, the horrible structure of bones that pierces the flesh, the terrifying grin of lipless teeth, the double hole of the eyes, that same mask that she had already seen when they found the other, her first-born, in a devastated field of Artois.

"My dear, my dear!" she gasped, as if those poor words of love could turn Destiny from its path.

The boy felt tears rising to his eyes from his poor beating heart. To make her forget, he forced himself to a jest, with dry throat and a sad smile that twisted his lips.

"I shall come back all right. . . . Come, tell me what you want me to bring back from over yonder. . . ."

Fiercely, she took his head between her two hands, and with a moan she said:

"Just bring me back your dear little face, my own. . . ."

CHAPTER VI

SLOVENLY dressed, in slippers, with his night-shirt open at the throat, François Dubourg perused what he had written. Through the window came the cool rustle of the leaves, and on the white wall could be seen the shadows of the trees fluttering like wings.

The carpet of the study was littered with newspapers. They lay on the arm-chair, on every piece of furniture, some not yet unfolded; by turning his head, the novelist was able to read the headlines in large type across three columns: "St. Magloire Provokes a Scene in the Chamber." Each time this caused a pang of annoyance and he dropped his pen, disheartened.

"After this performance of his," he mused, pulling at his beard, "I am in the soup as far as my decoration is concerned. . . . Hard luck, just when it had been promised to me, and on the eve of the nominations, too. . . ."

Then, with a sigh:

"And to what purpose, I ask you? He would have done far better to hold his tongue! . . ."

He wiped his glasses with a corner of his handkerchief, resuming his work with the close attention of an accountant. His publisher, on returning the proofs of his novel, *Monsieur de Cambrelus*, which was to come out in weekly instalments, had asked him to add two lines to each page. When the first numbers had been set up, it was noticed that the pages looked somewhat empty and it was necessary to lengthen the text, but so that additional expense should be avoided, the make-up was not to be altered. The novelist had met with far stranger experiences in his career, so that he had not been much surprised at this absurd

demand. Whilst his thoughts dwelt on his brother's escapade and on his lost decoration, he mechanically added the necessary lines.

If his nobleman was scouring the countryside M. Dubourg caused the moon to rise or the sun to shine—it did not much matter which—so long as the description did not take up more than two lines. When M. de Cambrelus came across some country bumpkin at the end of a page, he exclaimed, "Gadzooks! a pleasant-visaged varlet!" or shouted to him, "Hallo, you rascal!" . . . When he espied the coach of the beautiful Piedmontese, "an inexpressible confusion suddenly overwhelmed his mind," which filled the space exactly. On the last page but one, he even interjected a remark which was totally irrelevant. "In trying to do good," declared M. de Cambrelus, "a saint often does more harm than a heretic." The readers were destined never to understand why the Gascon Musketeer had ventured on such a precipitate statement to the barmaid of the inn, who was helping him to sausage-pie.

Even after his task was finished, François Dubourg had not the heart to proceed with his feuilleton for the *Français*. His mind was a blank, and he felt no inclination to do any more work. His absent glance strayed to the two diagrams pinned on the wall: that of "The Prince does not Deign," covered with crosses—a regular churchyard—and that of "Mademoiselle Flamberge"—comparatively virgin ground with its empty pigeon-holes.

Since the expenditure of human lives in his novels was considerable and his characters were always on the move, wandering from one end of the country to the other, from Gascony to Flanders, the novelist was compelled to set up two huge parti-coloured boards where each personage had his compartment, with his name and description. It would, for instance, have led to confusion if a fair man had suddenly turned dark or *vice versa*. He entered each change in their

fortunes: "wounded at Courtras," "nursed at the castle of Vineuse"—"elopement with the daughter of the Marquis." . . . When, finally, the thrust of a dagger or a bullet from an arquebus laid the young man low, he simply drew a cross in blue pencil over the compartment.

At ordinary times, the novelist had but to glance at this memorandum and count the empty allotments to take fresh heart, but to-day nothing could rouse him.

"He was famous, people admired him, we had everything at our feet, and there he goes and spoils everything by a hare-brained escapade like this," he pondered dejectedly. "When everything was going so well, too!"

M. Dubourg went down to the garden; time hung heavily on his hands.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed on reaching the terrace, "is that you?"

"It is," answered M. Van den Kris, who was reclining comfortably in a wicker chair, his feet resting on the kerb of the old well. "I came by the first train."

"Any news?"

"None. Only what the papers say. . . . I was with him yesterday morning, but he told me nothing. . . . What do you think of it?"

"A most terrible nuisance," sighed the novelist. "Just what you might expect him to do. . . ."

M. Van den Kris indicated Gérard with a nod.

"Well, your son thinks it is wonderful. He is proud of his uncle and is only sorry that he wasn't there himself."

M. Dubourg, lenient, shrugged his shoulders.

"Youth . . ." he said. "If you are not an anarchist at twenty it shows you have no heart. But if you remain one past that age, it shows you are an idiot. He'll get over it."

He glanced at the lapel of his coat and sighed:

"This won't make me love the negroes any better."

The pseudo-Dutchman suggested a game of bowls before lunch to drive away their worries.

"What are they saying in Barlincourt?" inquired M. Dubourg between two throws.

Gérard caught fire :

"Oh ! if you had seen the workmen on their way to the factory, they were all after me. . . . One had pinned the head-line from the *Peuple* across his cap, "Vive Saint Magloire." They were quite mad. They all asked me when he was coming back; they want to give him a great reception."

"That's it. Comrade Burtin will deliver a speech, there will be rounds of drinks and a concert arranged by the revolutionary youth. It is just the right programme for a saint !"

"Won't you really be pleased to see my uncle fêted?"

"Not in such a fashion. . . . Besides," added the novelist sceptically, "people always begin by carrying you in triumph, but it is only to drop you from a greater height. . . ."

M. Van den Kris, who stood in his shirt sleeves watching the game at the other end of the ground, was losing patience :

"Hallo ! you there ! Are you playing, or not?"

Gérard paid no attention.

"Well, I call it simply wonderful to do what he did there. To throw in their faces, right in the middle of the Chamber, what everybody is thinking."

"Everybody," repeated M. Dubourg, shrugging his shoulders. "Who is everybody? Always the same handful of hot-heads, who are always watching for an opportunity to make a row."

"But you, to start with. . . ."

The novelist eluded him.

"In the first place, I am not everybody. . . . Come on, play up. . . . Livingstone will lose his temper. . . ."

M. Van den Kris, however, was the only one in the house who had kept his composure. He had also kept his appetite. During lunch he ate ravenously. Merely to watch him and the Dubourgs at their meals was enough to make anyone hungry. The novelist was never in a bad temper when he was eating and drinking. He had been known to refuse his children some request with the *hors d'œuvre*—never with the coffee.

When the maid carried in the duck-pie, a home-made pie, golden, crisp, with the wings and the drumsticks still in their rough-grained skin, M. Dubourg and his guest looked at each other and nodded, smiling silently.

"A poor thing—human gratitude!" sententiously opined the novelist, "when we consider that we have preserved the name of the author of the Arvers sonnet and forgotten that of the man who invented piecrust!"

Madame Dubourg was proud of her lunch.

"We haven't had such a good meal for a week at least, have we?"

"No," the husband agreed; "since my brother's arrival we might have given points in frugality to the widow Pelé. I have never come across anyone who cared as little about his food as he does! The man was born to be a hermit. In my opinion, by enjoying good living in my own way I am giving glory to God. If He had wished man to find no pleasure in his food He would not have created chickens or given artichokes a heart; He would simply have provided the world with mines of cold veal."

When coffee was served, he said to his wife, who was pouring out the cognac:

"Go on—you can fill it up, it won't go to my head."

He had resumed the jovial demeanour which had characterised his attitude before the untoward happenings of the last week, and for the first time his children heard him refer to his brother in an almost playful tone.

As he rose from the table, M. Dubourg, having regained his composure, came to a decision :

"I have a good mind, after all, to go to Reuil and see what is happening there."

Gérard jumped at this;

"You will take me with you, won't you?"

M. Van den Kris offered to go with them, but changed his mind on the way, and when they arrived in Paris only saw them to the tramway of the Porte Maillot, giving the lateness of the hour as an excuse.

The Dubourgs, following the instructions of Jos Van den Kris, got out at Malmaison and found no need to ask their way: a double file of people, one going and the other returning, pointed it out to them. As soon as the papers had disclosed the retreat of the saint, sight-seers had flocked to it. The approach to Source Joséphine was barred by a cordon in front of the iron gate: but the crowd remained stationary round the establishment, unoccupied but full of perseverance, quite content to be allowed to gaze at the few privileged persons who were admitted within.

They drew up in line before the novelist and his son, at once on the alert. Those who were nearest pricked up their ears, when M. Dubourg gave his name to the sergeant.

"It is his brother."

At once, the idlers clustered round him. Gérard blushed with pride. Unable to contain himself, he whispered to a young man :

"And this isn't the end of it. . . ."

It may have been the warning, magnified as it passed from mouth to mouth, which inspired the Commissaire with the idea of doubling the number of his men and asking Paris for reinforcements.

The house was in a turmoil, though nothing was apparent. A silent perturbation, an uneasiness which tried to hide itself. The inmates kept to their rooms, the staff knew nothing. Between vespers and Benediction the garden remained deserted; emptiness

reigned everywhere. At the door of the parlour, a clean-shaven civilian, whose long frock-coat was vaguely reminiscent of a cassock, politely denied entrance to a journalist.

"No one, sir, absolutely no one. We are under strict orders."

"Orders from whom?" insisted the reporter.

An evasive gesture left him in doubt: it might as easily have been the Pope as the Prefect of Police.

Magloire Dubourg received his family in his room. They were struck by the bareness of it; the walls held nothing but a crucifix with an ivory Christ, a branch of blessed palms stuck between one arm and the cross. Father Labry was sitting with him, an anxious look upon his face.

Leaning against the window sill, another missionary was reading.

The saint seemed neither more agitated nor more grave than usual. The day before had really meant no more to him than other days; and the commotion which it had aroused, though it surprised him, left him quite unruffled. He had not even wished to glance at the evening papers which the missionary was reading in his stead, and he listened absent-mindedly to the passages that were read aloud for his benefit. Each attack, on the contrary, deeply impressed Father Labry, who sadly shook his white head and sighed broken-heartedly.

Gérard flew into a passion over an article signed by Bernheim.

"How beastly!"

The Evangelist smiled at him and shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

A perfidious paragraph of a semi-official character insinuated that the disturbances in West Africa might have been caused by the forty years of the saint's propaganda, and on the other hand, someone "in the immediate circle of the Archbishop of Paris" (one knows what that means) had declared in the

National that the Church absolutely disapproved of the attitude of the eminent traveller, who, moreover, did not belong to a religious order and had no "*authority whatever*": these two words were printed in italics in the paragraph.

Seated in his wicker chair, Magloire Dubourg gazed at the crucifix: an infinite tenderness illumined his countenance.

"Look here, you are not going to accept such treatment without defending yourself," stormed Father Labry for the twentieth time.

Without taking his eyes from the Christ, his lips hardly moving, the saint replied:

"Let it be. . . . A cross of insults is a cross easily borne."

"But this is all a tissue of lies."

"No matter. Sometimes we describe as calumnies the truths of which we are ashamed. And, after all, if I were pleasing to men, I would not be the servant of God."

Gérard bent his head, raging inwardly. He would have liked to see his uncle standing up against the slanderers, fighting them and rousing the suburbs to impassioned resistance; whereas, between these two priests, he only beheld a righteous man, resignedly submitting to undeserved stripes.

"Why should I resent their ignorance of the truth?" the old man continued—"If they already knew it, would He Who sent me have dragged me away from my forests to come and preach to them?"

The thin hands of Father Labry were nervously tying and untying his girdle, which was twisted round his waist like a cord.

"You know me, Magloire, I am a tough old customer. I don't mind turning my right cheek after the left, but all the same it must not last too long. . . . I agree with St. Anthony: 'Be content with not returning more blows than you have received.' Well, you have some blows to the good. . . ."

Gérard interposed impetuously:

"I feel sure that everyone would back my uncle in any course he might take."

The second missionary, having folded up his newspapers, had left the room, called away by the bell for evening service. For a while, silence fell between the four men.

"Couldn't you return to Barlincourt now?" asked M. François Dubourg. "You would be more comfortable than you are here, more free."

The saint pondered over this suggestion for a moment :

"No, not yet. . . . Perhaps I shall go to Paris for a few days. Afterwards, I shall see."

The novelist looked vexed.

"To Paris, the deuce ! . . . But that will cause a lot of talk. It will provoke fresh trouble and you'll end by making yourself unpopular."

Gérard jumped to his feet as if released by a spring :

"Not at all, on the contrary."

"Pardon me, Gérard, I am speaking seriously," his father interrupted him curtly. He drew closer to his brother :

"Come, be reasonable," he urged in persuasive tones, "if you begin haranguing the Parisians, don't think it will be the good Catholics who will come from their parishes to hear you. Those people loathe publicity of any kind. . . . You will only attract the worst sort of riff-raff, and it is quite certain to lead to trouble in the end."

Magloire Dubourg stared at the novelist.

"Do you think I came to convert honest people? You say that I shall only attract the rogues. Well ! so much the better, for they are the men I want above all to convince. It is not the people who are in good health who need the physician, but the others. . . ."

The old man remained thoughtful for a long while; then he began to speak again, but in a far away voice, with unseeing eyes, as if his words were dictated by a thought from outside. The three men listened absent-mindedly, convinced beforehand, like the devotee who

in church listens to the priest pouring out imprecations on ever-absent libertines. Gradually their attention wandered. Gérard was thinking of Jaurès; M. Dubourg of his decoration; Father Labry looked back to his first meeting with Saint Magloire on the Logone, near the entrance to the village, a baya with cabins of woven matting.

Sentence followed sentence, stern as the verses of a psalm.

"No, Time is not our Master. We shall endure as long as it endures, and we shall perish only when it perishes, when the doors of Eternity have opened, where its limits and our bodies will be no more. . . ."

All this passed over their heads like the drone of a prayer. M. Dubourg dozed. Now and then Father Labry's chin dropped to his chest, but he immediately roused himself, his eyes misty. With a clammy tongue he mumbled indistinctly, and forced himself to listen, his glance riveted on his friend, whose face faded away little by little in the gathering darkness.

The saint was revealing all that he carried in that inspired heart of his. He spoke at length, dwelling on the eternal progress of the universe, the continual renewal of Life. Stripped of their mysteries the truths of the Gospel appeared in all their luminous simplicity; before them speculations and false doctrines fell to the ground.

"They have not seen, neither have they understood," the saint murmured sombrely. "Where are the souls of our dead, tell me, where are their souls? . . . Thou knowest it, O Lord, that they are still in our devastated Eden, living over and over again; the breath which Thou blewest into Adam's mouth cannot have faded. . . . Thy truth blinds me: none will die before the End which will be proclaimed by Thy trumpets. We are Abel and Cain and all the men who ever lived, who were only ourselves in other lives."

The sound of deep breathing wrested the saint

from his ecstasy. His eyes and his mind returned to earth; he gazed around him, in the darkening room.

No one was listening.

With his head sunk on his shoulder, open mouthed, Father Labry was sleeping. M. Dubourg, leaning against the bed-post, also seemed to be slumbering. Gérard had noiselessly drawn near the window and, with bent head, he stared dreamily beyond the black trees to the road which was swept by the headlights of motor-cars.

The sudden silence of the saint conveyed no warning to them. No one stirred. Should he call to them? But to what purpose?

The window made a patch of twilight and, after looking at it, the room seemed a little darker, as if night had leapt in with a spring. All was black. The sound of the two men restfully breathing punctuated the silence.

Saint Magloire glanced up at the ivory Christ on the black wall. Little by little the Body seemed to be lifting itself out of the shadows, a dawn was breaking. . . .

With head stretched forward and shaking hands, the saint stared at the Figure with its pierced side, which slowly was coming back to life. The meagre ribs heaved with a sobbing breath: the Head under its crown of thorns turned from side to side, the lank sorrowful arms writhed on the wood. . . . After twenty centuries, He was still suffering on His Cross.

For one long week Source Joséphine was besieged by the inquisitive and the infirm. The latter arrived in hundreds from all over the country, even from abroad: incurable cases, whose only hope lay in a miracle. The Avenue Ducis looked like a street of Lourdes, packed with invalid chairs, in which children were being dragged along, and crowded with the halt and the blind, with sick people whose cheeks were hollow, shivering in spite of their blankets,

with repulsive beggars who harried the public by displaying their hideous stumps. The cafés in the neighbourhood carried on a roaring trade and the crowd overflowed as far as the Park of Malmaison, whose lawns were littered with greasy papers and empty bottles. Street vendors hawked the photograph of the saint, whilst others sold the portrait of the blind man cured by Saint Magloire, bearing on the reverse side the "true prayer of the saint :"

"In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, of the holy Lady Anne who gave birth to the Virgin Mary, who gave birth to Jesus Christ, may God bless thee and heal thee, poor suffering human creature, to the glory of God, the Holy Archangel Michael and Saint Magloire ! Amen."

As the Evangelist did not show himself, the crowd soon became irritable. At times the impatient flood, gulled by false news, rolled towards the railings, trying to crumple up the police cordon. But nothing was to be seen, and from the multitude which was being pressed backwards there arose a chorus of protests, complaints, and jests.

They clamoured for Saint Magloire to the strains of a popular tune and sang in unison a ballad sold by the hawkers, whose refrain ran :

"He hails from the land of bananas."

Invalids and mothers held out their arms in supplication, but the house, with its closed shutters, did not respond. Except for the bell, which tolled for the services, there was nothing to indicate life within its walls.

Then, from day to day, the crowd became tumultuous and hostile. After that it dwindled away. The cripples were the only ones who kept on returning, as numerous as ever : they foregathered in groups, always the same, and recounted their infirmities to each other. To keep up their hopes they harped untiringly on the miracles of Saint Magloire.

One evening after a stifling day, which the crowd

spent in tramping about in the sun, a most startling incident occurred. At the foot of a big tree, leaning over an invalid carriage a woman yelled.

"My child! Quick, quick, she is dying, help!"

The little girl lay motionless, with a waxen complexion and hollow eyes. Her discoloured lips, open in a dreadful smile, disclosed clenched teeth. A mob collected. . . .

"The saint should be told. Go and ring the bell," said someone.

Thereupon a confused running to and fro ensued; people rushed away; the police officer sent off cyclist messengers, somebody came out of Source Joséphine with ether and some linen. The child had stopped breathing and the mother, overwhelmed by grief, sobbed against a tree. It was all over. . . .

The next day, certain papers printed in heavy type: "Saint Magloire allows a child to die on his doorstep."

Others, by way of opposition, congratulated him on keeping up this attitude and refusing to lend himself to fresh demonstrations.

After this event, the excitement of the crowd dropped. Soon only two policemen were left on duty. The few idlers who still strolled along the Avenue Ducis only glanced at the house and passed on.

Inside the establishment, the inmates had split into two groups: the first—missionaries all of them—remained faithful to Saint Magloire, but the second showed a hostile reserve. They were frightened by the heterodox pronouncements of the Evangelist, his disagreements with the Archbishop, and, finally, his scandalous intervention in the Chamber. They anxiously commented with the Superior on those articles in the papers which discussed the doctrine of the saint, every editor having apparently attached to himself a private theologian.

"His whole doctrine rests on an assumption which has been admitted like a fact, and on a hope, which

has been presented as a certainty," could be read in the *National*. "Magloire Dubourg has composed a system for his own use, which combines Buddhistic principles, Christian dogma, and spiritualistic beliefs; and the whole is presented with an out-of-date humanitarianism which seems to belong to the days of Fourier and Saint Simon."

L'Illustré was still more caustic.

"It needs a strong dose of ingenuousness," its editor wrote, "to believe that it is possible to transform the world with half a dozen ideas."

Many already looked upon Magloire Dubourg as a schismatic on the point of founding a new religion, and they cited discouraging precedents: Vintras, the sham prophet from Lyons, who founded the creed of mercy, Auguste Comte, and even Abbé Chatel, who ended his days as a grocer. Bernheim, turning Christian for the occasion, did his best to tear to pieces the doctrine of the man from Africa.

"I do not see much difference," he wrote, "between this unlimited transmigration of souls without memory and materialism pure and simple. It is not the immorality of the substance that matters, it is that of the personality—and the latter does not exist or it is not realised."

Scientific men mocked at reincarnation and believers were indignant. Jacques de Nointel was to be found among the few who defended these theories, or at least presented them in good faith.

"One should not, as many have done, liken this belief to the Buddhist doctrine," he explained. "They are not only different, but contradictory. In fact, the doctrine of Sakia Mouni in a way justifies social inequalities, since it claims that the place occupied by the individual in society depends on the merit of his actions in former lives which bring reward or chastisement; whereas Saint Magloire founds his teaching on goodwill and mutual assistance, for man cannot know in what form his eternal soul will come to life

to-morrow. If we admit this, we must bring about the reign of universal happiness, in order some day to have our share of it."

All these effusions, like a crop of heresies, unsettled the priests. Their admiration gave place to fear: they avoided the saint, they very nearly shunned him. Magloire Dubourg, fortunately, appeared but seldom. The regulations having been relaxed, he was accosted each time he went out by reporters, would-be patients, and maniacs who lay in wait for him in the garden; and to escape them he kept almost entirely to his room.

But in spite of all these precautions, the relentless pursuers succeeded in reaching him, and the old man was obliged to submit to the strangest conversations. One morning a beggar, who imagined herself to be Cleopatra re-incarnated, became violent and had to be dragged away. Another madwoman implored him to exorcise her because the Devil had breathed into her the spirit of a poisoner. This was probably a result of the newspaper polemics on the subject of transmigration which had turned the brains of these unhappy creatures.

Now began the procession of business men and traffickers in doubtful trades:

A famished-looking doctor, with the stamp of clandestine obstetrics upon him, and accompanied by his sleeping partner, came to the saint with the proposal that he should open a sort of clinic in Paris, where he could heal the sick under the control of the Medical Faculty. A regular salary of 400,000 francs was guaranteed to Magloire, plus a percentage on the profits. The miracle man drove them out, but as they retreated before his wrath, the sleeping partner, an olive-skinned Levantine, crooked the fingers of his right hand to ward off the evil eye.

Someone else offered to publish the *Memoirs of the Evangelist* in four languages, and to organise a lecture tour round the world. This man did not demand

miracles as a regular attraction, but suggested that they should happen occasionally. After these came the procession of visionaries, adepts of strange sects who thought they had found their Prophet in the saint, occultists and psychics, supported by their mediums, who wished to induce the all-powerful old man to help them in evoking the spirits of the departed by turning tables or sending their subjects to sleep. It was perhaps in order to wear out the saint that the Superior of the establishment allowed them all to enter, while he pretended to send them away.

Thus there arrived from Lyons a delegation from the Gnostic Church, headed by its Patriarch, a certain M. Piquenol, who styled himself John III. Magloire Dubourg, who until then had been in absolute ignorance of the sect of Fabre des Essarts, received them wearily but without mistrust, and listened to their speeches, whose meaning he did not always catch. The Patriarch, a little pot-bellied man, wore a bowler hat and had slipped his ceremonial insignia over his tweed coat. His assistant would have filled the part better, for he carried himself with the dignity conferred on him by his tall figure, his white beard and high, bald forehead; but as soon as he opened his mouth his stutter made him ridiculous, the more so as he fought for his words with comical insistence. The third delegate, a tall old man with stiff legs and a long scraggy neck, came to his rescue and finished the sentence without hesitation, for all three thought in unison, though never for long.

The three men, each speaking in turn, expounded their doctrine: the world as the creation of the Devil, earthly life as the reign of Satan.

"Man ought to be . . . he . . . he . . ." obstinately stammered the purple-faced assistant.

"Help God to defeat the Master of Evil," mechanically completed the stiff-legged initiate.

In the garden, the Superior lamented with a sigh.

"What a pity! There he is now giving audience to

heretics. . . . Condemned by the Holy See, do you hear that? I remember that in his Apostolic Letter His Holiness Leo XIII. went so far as to call them Albigenses. . . .”

When the three men had departed, shown out by Magloire Dubourg, the Superior followed John III. with suspicious eyes, discovering in the red-bearded citizen of Lyons a resemblance to Satan.

The medical profession also took an interest in the “case” of the miracle worker, and Magloire Dubourg underwent a minute examination by a famous neurologist, who was anxious to show that the magnetic influence of the explorer was the explanation of the miracles.

“Why do you attach so much importance to such small matters?” the saint, irritated, finally demanded of him. “In this world where everything is but a continual miracle, how can you be amazed at these few miserable cures? Are not all things that surround us far more mysterious? Explain to me how the planets revolve, how thought is born, and I may perhaps tell you by what means my blind man recovered his sight. . . .”

At last, the establishment being no longer besieged by the crowds, Saint Magloire began to go out: the time was ripe to open his propaganda.

From the very first days, these sermons in the open caused an extraordinary sensation in Paris. The old man spoke wherever he happened to find himself: at factories as the workmen were leaving, at the doors of churches, in the cafés in industrial districts; and he had been seen, almost at the same hour, in the Parc Monceau among the children of the rich and on the shabby slopes of the Boulevard Bessières surrounded by apaches and loose women.

Astounded by his sudden advent in their midst, people at first listened to him with curiosity, mainly interested in his appearance; but soon they succumbed to the power of his personality. His ardent eloquence

stirred them profoundly; he was the bearer of new promises and the soul of the people always responds to a message of hope.

The saint's fame spread through the suburbs like a fever. People lay in wait for him, and, as soon as they caught sight of him, the workmen's dwellings emptied themselves into the street in the twinkling of an eye: artisans left their tools, and joined the rush of shirt-sleeved men and aproned housewives. The saint was hemmed in on all sides; everyone tried to touch his bare hand and the mothers held out their children to ask his blessing on them.

"I cannot," he said, "I am not a priest."

But he lifted the grimy babies in his arms and kissed them, while the multitude cheered.

Now and then there came interruptions. When these proceeded from drunkards or brawlers, the others promptly silenced them and sent them flying; but sometimes an unconvinced listener or a militant frequenter of public meetings heckled the saint and the latter argued with him, standing on the steps of a church, or on a chair borrowed from a bar.

The Government at last became disquieted by this agitation and attempts were made to catch Magloire at fault. Dubious looking individuals were seen to mix with the crowd and they endeavoured to extract dangerous admissions and incitements to rioting from the Evangelist; but the saint, in his innocence, foiled them every time, for he preached nothing but goodwill alike to the embittered paupers and to the policemen who were trying to embroil him in a disturbance.

One morning when the saint, perched on a coil of ropes, was preaching on the banks of the Saint Martin Canal, these soothing words exasperated a bargeman. There was a smell of green bilge water, and the steam tugs, with their hoarse blast, trailed their smoke across the sky.

"So that's it," interrupted the man with the blue

jersey. "We must let the capitalists gobble us up and keep mum? You've an oily tongue like the rest of 'em, you have. . . ."

The saint was not offended.

"I do not tell you to bend your backs," he replied. "On the contrary, I tell you to stand up, the hour is near. . . . But if the oppressed only think of becoming tyrants in their turn, I loathe them no less than I loathe their oppressors."

"Well, then, what is one to do?" insisted the man, to whom this religious talk was unintelligible.

"First of all, believe in God," thundered the Evangelist. "As long as faith has not purified their hearts, people will talk of justice, but only in order to rob others in its name. Look around you! Is the world just?"

A clamour answered him:

"No, no."

"But look into your hearts," continued the saint, "what reigns in them but envy? Believe me, you bargeman, it is not by plundering the rich that the hosts of the poor are lessened: more people become poor, that is all. . . . What must you do? You asked me just now. I answer you: believe, believe! When men know the truth they will understand that we have to live on earth until the end of all time, powerful to-day and miserable to-morrow, at the mercy of the great wind, which bears their souls along. There will be no more hatred and everyone will work for universal happiness, since by doing so he will work for his own. . . . Do not look far afield for the enemies whom you must vanquish before happiness may reign on earth: the worst enemy resides within yourselves. So long as man shall covet his neighbour's wife or his neighbour's goods, so long as the strong shall believe that he has a right over the weak, so long as justice has to carry a sword, so long shall the World seek for its lost Paradise. . . ."

A long row of heads craned curiously over the

parapet. The steps were black with people. Some, at the imminent risk of tumbling into the water at each push, had climbed on to the barges which lay at the wharf; whilst others, with their clothes whitened by plaster, hoisted themselves on to piles of sacks.

The latest comers pressed into the crowd; people were jammed against the wall and scraped their knuckles on the rough stone, and new arrivals were still to be seen running across the bridge. The silence was profound: only in the distance the grating of carriage wheels, the crash of unloaded scrap iron, the hoot of motor-cars, all the noises of the street. . .

"I have scoured the world; I have lived in the forests where God provides his creatures with bread, milk, butter, wine, with the sap and the fruit of the trees. I have laboured in the mines, where each blow of the pickaxe lays bare a treasure; I have harvested in the fields which ever grow green again, and I know now that the Earth is rich enough to give to each far beyond his wants. . . . Work: your effort will be repaid unto you a hundredfold. But if someone says to you: "I do not work because I am the Master," drive him out without pity, for he has blasphemed. For there is no other Master but God. Cursed be the wicked who want to wax fat on the bread which others have earned by the sweat of their brow. Cry to them like St. Paul "May they starve who will not work."

He flung out these words with all his strength, emphasising them with his clenched fist, and his anathema reverberated through the tense silence. A shiver passed over the entire crowd of workmen. Then there burst forth a frantic cheer, a frenzied clamour:

"Long live Saint Magloire."

Sunburnt arms, hands hardened by work, stretched forward, trying to seize him, to carry him in triumph, but the Evangelist pushed them aside, still endeavouring to make himself heard in the uproar.

The crowd eddied and swirled. . . . Genuine enthusiasts and evil-minded agitators were attempting to sway the mob.

"To Paris, to Paris."

Constables were seen rushing across the bridge. Lorries from the Prefecture were unloading others on the quay, while police sergeants drew a cordon round the place.

"Cut off the saint. . . . No violence!" rapped out a man in a frock coat, who was made ridiculous by the contrast of an umbrella held against his tri-colour scarf of office.

The multitude howled, but from a safe distance, no longer daring to advance. Women were trying to struggle free, lifting their children into the air. Round Saint Magloire the more resolute gathered in a solid block.

"Don't worry. . . . We'll stick to you. . . ."

Stifled shrieks rang out amidst hooting and whistling. With rapid steps the police brutally bore down on the crowd. The Evangelist, mounted on a lorry that was being unloaded, suddenly appeared above them all.

"Disperse," he ordered. . . . "Let everyone go home. . . . I promise you that we shall meet again."

Fresh cheering answered him, but he lost himself in the press. He probably passed through one of the houses, going in by one entrance and coming out by another, for he was seen no more; and when the police had cleared the street, they were unable to track him.

That same evening Magloire Dubourg received at Source Joséphine a visit from the Prefect of Police, who came to deliver to him the instructions of the Government.

"These continual disturbances must cease," the Prefect said to him with an embarrassed air. . . .

"Hire a hall if you like. The authorities of course

do not mean to forbid your propaganda, but we can no longer tolerate these demonstrations. My orders in this respect are definite. . . . Just think of it, with all these ruffians who infest Paris. . . ."

The saint stared at him, two grey slits showing between his eyelids.

"If you were ordered to arrest me, what would you do?"

The Prefect looked up as though accepting a challenge :

"Why, I would arrest you," he answered dryly.

Magloire gently shook his head :

"Some day," he said, "they will order you to do so and you will not dare."

CHAPTER VII

ON Sundays the gramophone at the Café Dumarchey played all day long, with its big horn turned towards the crowded room; and the customers at the tables to make themselves heard had even to yell louder than on week-days, so that there was a constant confusion of shouts and laughter and disputes, mingled with nasal selections from "Tosca," and the yodelling of Tyrolese songs.

Milot worked the instrument and chose the records : it was his Sunday recreation. When he felt sentimental, when the sight of a pretty girl had left him dreaming, he spent the morning with slow waltzes and romantic ballads, taking up the refrains himself; when he and his friends had been calling up memories of the War (the great slaughter-house was Milot's name for it), "Sidi-Brahim" and "Paris-Belfort" resounded at full blast; then, when the second bell ringing for Mass indicated the passing by of the devout, came the turn of all the questionable songs. The sacristan, at the doorway, watched for Baptistine Pelé, and directly he caught sight of her black cloak at the bend of the avenue, he rushed to the instrument and hastily put on the best record of the lot : "My Rattlesnake," or "Take away your hand from there." It had become a tradition in Barlincourt : Baptistine on her way to church must be greeted by the most ribald ditties in the modern repertory. With eyes lowered and hands folded on her prayer-book, she hastened by; but in spite of all her efforts she could not avoid hearing, and she was ashamed to find that in the long run she had learnt the tune by heart. Milot, balancing himself on his sound leg, watched her hurrying past, and enjoyed a fresh triumph on

each occasion. Then when she had disappeared, he took off the record, drained his glass of white wine, remarked "See you later" and went off to take his part in the service. He did not stay away long.

The moment Mass was over, and he had put his chain, his staff and his coat back in the cupboard, he returned to the café, and while he waited for some customer to turn up who would treat him to an "apéritif," he put on a few more records.

In the afternoon the gramophone was carried into the dancing hall; and the youth of the country-side danced to the music of the Republican Guards. The girls came in pairs, arm-in-arm, red-cheeked, with starched bodices, and the young men, "dressed to kill," with their hats on one side and huge roses in their button-holes, looked like temporary altars. Every Sunday Petit Louis, the nephew of the Dubourg's cook, surreptitiously brought Madame Pelé's little servant as his dancing partner while the widow was at church.

Save for the scant half-hour of Vespers, Milot did not leave the café again all day. Only, while he was at the dance he wished himself at the bar chatting with the men, and while he was in the café, straining his voice to convince his audience, he still listened with one ear to the music, full of jealousy that any one but himself should work the gramophone.

"Those fools will end by smashing it."

And, leaving those who had been arguing with him, he would go back to the hall where perspiring couples were disporting themselves, dancing waltzes, schottishes and quadrilles as if all of them were jigs.

On this particular Sunday the cripple, for a wonder, had not been seen in the big hall. Ever since the morning he had been disputing with all the customers, changing his views from time to time that no opportunity for bawling should be lost. On one point, however, he did not waver, and he never grew tired of emphasising it :

"Magloire's done well to choose Barlincourt: he'd never find a village where there are so many cuckolds in so few houses."

All the cafés in the district were overflowing with people, squabbling in indignant groups, even at the doorways of the bars. Since the return of the saint three days earlier, the population had been living in a state of effervescence.

On the day of his return Barlincourt had given him a magnificent reception; they had cheered him and embraced him, they had offered him flowers, a procession had followed him up to the villa, and the Mayor, who wanted to do something without compromising himself, had sent the Deputy-Mayor to offer the good wishes of the municipality. As for Abbé Choisy, he came openly, cordially holding out his arms, for he had understood nothing of the too subtle insinuations of *La Croix*, which was the only paper he ever read.

The little town was proud of the sudden celebrity which it owed to the saint. Though Magloire's intervention at the Chamber and his preachings in the suburbs had gained him the support of the workmen at the Aubernon factory, they had roused mistrust among the people of means, the commercial element and the big farmers; but since they were proud of having as a fellow-citizen this man of whom the whole world was talking, they admired him nevertheless, and hid their resentment. The little country place had become the centre of universal curiosity.

At the festivals in the neighbourhood, the boys from Barlincourt were so much in demand that they began to believe themselves of a different clay from the others. The presence of one man had been sufficient to increase the stature of them all.

On this fine Sunday the Parisians had come out in fairly large numbers, hoping to see something; but directly one of them entered a café he was met with

suspicious looks and the conversation was carried on in a lower tone, as though it were embarrassing to discuss family affairs before strangers.

The men, excited by white wine and other drinks, grew quarrelsome. The Dumarchey girl, seated in a corner behind the counter, and leaving the waitress to run about with bottles under her arm, cast black looks at the brawlers. Despite her wrinkled skin and her lifeless hair, she dreamed of a rich and elegant society where people reckoned in louis instead of francs, and in her till she kept secreted *Le Roman d'un Jeune Homme Pauvre*."

"Well, anyhow," someone cried, above the tumult of voices, "one thing is certain: since he has been here there hasn't been one death in the district."

All fell silent, nonplussed. They tried to remember. . . . It was indeed true. . . . For weeks there had not been a funeral, not even a very little one; yet babies in the country die quickly of the treacherous summer fever. The idea suddenly struck them that a supernatural force was hovering over them.

"I say," they asked an old man, a clean-shaven peasant, dressed in a waistcoat with sleeves, "has this ever happened before?"

The old man shook his head:

"Never, there's magic in it."

They stood open-mouthed, too amazed even to rejoice. Milot, with a blow of his fist on the table, made the glasses rattle.

"Upon my word, you must be cracked!" he burst out. "It's a fact, if cuckolds could swim you'd run no risk of getting drowned. . . . Why, do you believe that he will prevent you from pegging out if a lorry runs over your belly?"

He turned to the workmen:

"You've got no more sense than a lot of clodhoppers."

"If you yell like that you'll always be right,"

answered one of them. . . . "We're no stupider than you are, and we don't believe in miracles. But all the same, some things are facts. Look at the Trembler, didn't he cure him? You can't deny it."

The Trembler, who was already a little drunk, was sitting at the end of a bench. Against the wall he had set his placard, on which were pasted the articles which had appeared about him, his interview and his portraits, and under the table he had pushed the tray full of prophecies on gaily-coloured paper that he sold to the people from Paris.

"That proves nothing," shouted the beadle. . . . "You've only got to read what the scientists said about it. It was his nerves that were troubling him."

The racket began again, deafening, punctuated by curses and the sound of fists banged on the table. Nothing but rubicund faces and glistening eyes. Through the cigarette smoke, which was so dense that it scorched the eyes, drinkers could be seen standing up, holding their hands trumpet-wise to their mouths and shouting their orders through them. The waitress, stupefied by the din, turned from side to side, not knowing whom to serve first. Glasses rolled about, and were shattered to fragments.

Everyone was talking without listening, simply trying to shout louder than anyone else. They were intoxicated with all sorts of absurd conjectures. They proposed to nominate the saint as deputy, or even as parish priest to begin with, in order to keep him in the district. From time to time the Trembler wanted to put in a word, but Milot cut him short:

"Shut up, you miracle!" he flung out, looking at him out of the corner of his eye.

The beggar bent his head submissively. At last the bar seemed to clear. Table after table was deserted and the café began to empty. The talking grew less loud and the chink of coins was heard on the counter. The waitress, taking advantage of the lull, began to get the lamps ready. It was time to go to supper.

Lively groups passed by, breaking up as they reached their own doors. Families came back from the fields, or from some neighbouring fête, carrying blue vases won in the fair-booths. The streets were bathed in the half-light of evening.

And in dim farm-kitchens, where supper was being served, round the oil-cloth covers of workmen's tables, under the chandeliers in bourgeois homes, there was but one subject of conversation :

"Since he came to the district there has not been a single death. . . ."

The King's Domain had resumed its air of austerity. Madame Dubourg no longer ventured to laugh, the menus were of the simplest, and the piano remained closed.

The Evangelist seemed to live in isolation among his relatives, as though in his years of wandering he had lost the habit of seeking happiness elsewhere than in himself. He would sometimes remain silent throughout a whole meal; then, dragging himself with an effort out of his perpetual dream, he would join awkwardly in their conversation, understanding nothing of their tastes, of their desires or their small cares.

In his presence the Dubourgs dared not discuss the theatre, nor anything which might resemble pleasure; the most innocuous subject of conversation suddenly appeared improper, and they even felt uncomfortable if they used certain words in his presence. They grew into the habit of lowering their voices instinctively, as though in church. Yvonne, having said "What a Tartar!" when speaking of the baker's wife, blushed scarlet, and turned away her eyes before the stern glance her father bent on her. Thus meals went by, edifying and dreary.

What most grieved M. François Dubourg was that his brother took so little interest in his writings. Casually, as though the matter were of no importance,

he had laid some copies of his successful books on the table by Magloire's bedside.

"Here you are," he had said jestingly, "if one night you cannot sleep. . . ."

But Magloire did not seem to have even opened them. One afternoon, however, as the novelist was leaving the garden to go back to his work, the saint asked him :

"What will be the title of your next book?"

"Monsieur de Cambrelus."

"Ah! And what do you explain in it?"

The novelist smiled at the naïve question :

"Why, I don't explain anything in it. . . . It is the story of the younger son of a noble family, in the sixteenth century, who gets mixed up with the League and . . ."

"I quite understand," the saint interrupted gently. "It is fiction, an imaginary story. But what ideas do you express in it? What is the conclusion you draw?"

His brother almost lost patience :

"Why, there's no conclusion," he answered, a little annoyed. "It is not my business to defend any ideas in a novel. It's not a text-book of philosophy. I write to entertain people."

The saint nodded his head :

"Ah, yes," he said in a low voice. "To entertain. . . ."

He remained silent for a moment. Then he went on :

"You know that I am very fond of you, François. Well, I have read the books that you left in my room. They didn't interest me. . . . No. . . . You don't mind my saying this, do you?"

The novelist tried to conceal his chagrin.

"Why, no, not at all. You are not in the habit of reading novels, perhaps you don't know. . . ."

"Yes, no doubt that is it," the saint agreed eagerly. "I probably don't understand. Stories don't penetrate any more into my old brain. But, you know,

it makes my heart ache to see men getting excited over futile tales, and not giving, throughout their whole existence, one hour, one single hour of reflection, to the mystery out of which they came, the mystery into which they will return. . . . Their unconsciousness terrifies me. . . . I feel as though I were watching children building a palace of cards in a burning house. God has given them a mind, and never do they use it to think of Him. You have intelligence and knowledge, François; why don't you guide them towards the truth? Believe me, all words are vain which do not help to make life better. You deceive men when you only talk to them of themselves, vaunting their paltry passions, exaggerating their mean gestures. . . . Man is so blinded by pride that he has come to believe only in himself; and to help the world to forget its wretchedness you do nothing but shake rattles."

François Dubourg, thoroughly bored, scraped the gravel of the path with the point of his shoe to keep himself in countenance, and endured the lecture. The words slid vainly over him like the reproaches of a master over the resigned head of a schoolboy. At last, when his brother had finished, he made his escape, and on the way up to his study he muttered with annoyance,

"Good Lord, what a deluge! I don't need to be converted! He takes me for a nigger!"

Then, throwing back the shutters which kept the room cool during lunch-time, he saw the saint wending his way towards the kitchen garden.

"Good, now he's gone back to his bees," he said, shrugging his shoulders. . . . "Adèle is already refusing to go and pick anything for fear of getting stung, and the gardener's complaining. Well, it's getting to be a funny kind of house!"

At the far end of the kitchen garden, Magloire Dubourg had indeed set up three hives, which he had made out of a little straw, a wicker basket and some

flat tiles. Round them he had planted thyme, mint and mignonette, to encourage the bees to come there for honey, and while he dug in the garden they buzzed about him.

He spent a part of his days in the garden because he was less conspicuous there than in the park, where people perpetually came and worried him.

On some days he was not to be seen till dinner-time, and his place at the luncheon table remained empty. He would start off, walking straight before him, wheresoever the road led him. He was reported to have been seen preaching in the open fields, at the hour when the men, seated on the ground around the threshing-machine, were eating their midday meal; and he had been found haranguing the workmen at the factory-gates.

At the iron-works of Montataire, mounted on a pile of coal-bricks, he had spoken to a gang of stokers coming off duty, drunk with fatigue, their hard faces seamed with black wrinkles; and the affair had ended in tumult, with empty bottles being pulled out of knapsacks and brandished like clubs.

He invariably came back penniless, having parted with his last copper; one evening, sitting down on the side of the road, he had even given his shoes to a tramp whose bare feet were bleeding. Sometimes he came back with destitute people who had to be fed for two or three days and supplied with cast-off clothing. He would take his meals with them on the terrace, while the dog, showing his teeth, growled and dragged at his chain.

Another time, he brought back a labourer from Barlincourt, who had formerly been employed for rough work at the villa and had been dismissed because once, when he was drunk, he had insulted his employers and had gone off, leaving his job unfinished.

Mme. Dubourg gave no sign of her annoyance at seeing the man come back, but when he had gone, she expressed her disapproval to the saint.

"It is true," he admitted, "he is rather a scamp, but you will see that we shall end by making a respectable lad of him."

Meanwhile "the respectable lad" was doing no good at all. He had smashed to atoms the bell-glasses Etienne used for his melons, while he was helping to put them in order; he could not be induced to clean the barn thoroughly, and whenever any member of the household passed by, he would stand with his head bent sulkily, his cap pushed down on the back of his head, whistling between his teeth.

Magloire Dubourg alone was able to extract obedience from this ruffian; the labourer was positively afraid of him. At every turn, the Evangelist would come up to him and, looking him straight in the eyes, would ask :

"Why do you want to steal those eggs?"

Or :

"If you upset the hives the bees will follow you and sting you till you drop."

And each time, unfailingly, he exposed some evil thought in the other's mind. The labourer had been reduced to fleeing from him in terror. Then he was seen no more; he went about the country-side saying that he would not work any longer at the King's Domain because Magloire Dubourg practised magic on him.

The inhabitants, far from being turned against the Evangelist by this, were inclined to see in the labourer's tales a new proof of the power of their saint. The majority of M. Quatrepomme's voters—though they were not in the least bigoted, nor more foolish than others—were now convinced that Barlincourt was under the protection of Saint Magloire Dubourg and that they had nothing more to fear from Fate.

Moreover, one indisputable fact remained, and the women, by repeating it over and over again, had succeeded in unsettling everyone: there were no more deaths in Barlincourt. There was not even a sick

person whose condition gave rise to anxiety, and old Dr. Rouquette regarded this as a personal triumph.

"That fellow Blum could not get such results, with his stethoscope and his Hun pulsometer," he reiterated as he went his rounds.

As soon as people in Paris heard of the state of affairs, the pilgrimages began again. Sick people arrived who wished to live in this land of promise, and after a few days there was not a vacant lodging in the district. At Dumarchey's they were taking boarders, and M. Quatrepomme, for 3000 francs, had let to an invalid woman a brick-paved outhouse, very poorly furnished, where he was in the habit of ripening his pears and putting his potatoes to sprout.

It was just at that moment, at the height of the excitement, that old Moucron, having caught cold in the rain, came in shivering and took to his bed. His son would willingly have let him die without an effort to save him; but the news of the old man's illness caused a sensation in the neighbourhood, and the heir, spied on by everyone, was obliged to send for the doctor. He called in Dr. Blum, whom he believed to be the less capable of the two.

The young practitioner left the farm transfigured, making no attempt to conceal his satisfaction.

"It's all up with him," he declared to the inquisitive groups who were waiting for him outside. "The left lung is completely choked. . . . Expectoration very bad. . . . He won't last a week."

In an hour the whole of Barlincourt knew about it; people were wrangling in the streets and the saint's adherents were stricken with consternation. Dr. Rouquette, when the information reached him, hurried to the Moucron farm.

"Let me have a look at your father," he said to young Moucron, who gave him but a cold welcome. "He's an old comrade of mine; I should like to pull him through. You need not pay me anything, and I will supply the medicines into the bargain."

He spent nearly a quarter of an hour sounding the old man, made him count aloud and cough, felt his pulse, took his temperature, looked at his gums, examined his handkerchiefs; and without losing any time he began to put leeches on his back and chest. Under the glasses, they could be seen swelling, heavy with black blood, and Father Rouquette, rubbing his hands, said :

"That's the disease coming out. . . ."

He wrote out a long prescription, after having looked at the one his colleague had ordered, and taking great care not to make use of a single one of his drugs; then, by way of ingratiating himself with the son, whom he knew to be greedy, he added a bottle of syrup.

As he came out, he was surrounded.

"Well," said he with a broad smile, "we shall pull him through, old Moucron. . . . A nice little inflammation of the lungs, that is nothing. . . ."

And he added with a wink :

"Specially at Barlincourt, the place where no one dies."

The partisans of the saint took heart again.

"He won't die !" declared the one group.

"He's done for !" replied the other.

In the streets people stopped one another to ask for news of the sick man. The statements of the two doctors were canvassed : Blum's, to whom all the symptoms were alarming, and Rouquette's, who with determined optimism rejoiced equally when the patient coughed more and when he coughed less. Early in the morning boys ran to the farm.

"The shutters of his room are open," they cried, hurrying back at full speed.

And thus people knew that old Moucron was still alive. At the Dubourgs' house, they waited with beating hearts. Mme. Dubourg was nervous, Gérard more agitated than usual, and whenever the bell at the gate rang, Yvonne grew quite pale. Saint Magloire alone remained aloof from all the excitement.

On several occasions, knowing that the farmer was ill, he had asked whether he was any better, but he had never spoken at length about it. Whenever he left the villa, urchins escorted him—at a distance—in the hope of witnessing a miracle, but they never got any reward for their pains.

The Evangelist went out walking as he had done in the past, with no special destination in view, way-laying passers-by to talk to them. At first the inhabitants allowed him to accost them with a sort of emotional satisfaction, and listened to him respectfully; but those whom he had already catechised several times ended by avoiding him when they saw him coming. Thus Etienne, the gardener, now fled to the other end of the kitchen garden directly he caught sight of the saint.

"You'd spend the whole day doing nothing, if you let him talk," he grunted.

The Widow Pelé, though she found the ideas and the ways of the saint strange, had, more than anyone else, pursued him with her attentions, believing perhaps that the piety they had in common would bring them closer together. She questioned him impertinently about his past life, and gurgled with satisfaction when she discovered that the Evangelist was less strict in religious observances than she was herself.

Her son also harassed Magloire Dubourg, shaking like a leaf at the mere thought that he was talking to a saint. He was fascinated and thought of nothing but becoming a missionary and getting chopped up alive by savages. This simplicity of mind filled the old man with pity.

"You must not sin through excess of virtue, my boy," he said to him; "it is a want of humility to covet virtues which everyone admires. Be satisfied with being a good man."

The big simpleton listened, trembling in every limb, not daring to look him in the face, for he was always afraid of committing a sin unawares.

By the time he was five years old he was already being threatened with hell-fire on every occasion, with or without reason. Mme. Baptistine Pelé was too unctuous to beat her son, except on rare and private occasions, but directly he was guilty of the smallest peccadillo—a dish too quickly seasoned, an errand badly done, a rent in his breeches, or even less—she flew into a terrible passion that drained the colour from her cheeks.

“Go away!” she would gasp in a stifled voice. “Heartless boy! . . . Accursed! . . . Do you want to send me to perdition? . . . Go and ring for Mass!”

And Joséphin would go and ring.

The reason why the widow gave him such an order was that in the beginning these scenes used to take place in the early morning. Joséphin, being lazy, was disinclined to get up, and his mother, to punish him, used to send him to ring the bell for Mass without giving him any breakfast. But as time went on, the youth, stupefied by these continual scoldings, always trembling, seeing sins on all sides, pulled about and punished, had simply grown stupid. At school he was no more of a duffer than other boys, but no sooner was he at home than fear of his mother robbed him of what little sense he had, and he could do nothing right.

“Go and ring for Mass! Go and ring!”

Soon the widow took to shouting it at all hours of the day, and the terrified choir-boy would go and ring without disputing the order, whether it came in the middle of a meal or after the evening Angelus.

At first the neighbourhood had been astounded, and Abbé Choisy had protested against such abuse of the bells; but nothing could withstand the devout widow, and, being annoyed at the intervention, she had made Joséphin ring all the harder. In the end the parish grew accustomed to it, and now when the bell was heard people

simply remarked that Joséphin had committed some new blunder.

When the meaning of these inappropriate peals was explained to him, Saint Magloire had intervened with his customary brusqueness, and this had been the cause of the rupture between him and the widow.

Nowadays the latter contented herself with a half-curtsey when she met him, and she had made the ladies of the Society for a Holy Death read a pious leaflet, the "Propagator of the three Ave Marias," in which a Canon, who wrote over a signature of three stars, condemned the transmigration of souls as the worst kind of monstrosity.

Yvonne's uncle had been no more tactful with Georges Aubernon than with the widow. The young idler, who paid overmuch attention to his toilet, had displeased him at once.

"Then, do you never do any work?" he had asked him point-blank one afternoon. "You are wrong. He has not earned his share of Heaven who does not reach the end of the journey with weary arms."

The young man had been vexed, the Dubourgs annoyed; but since they had grown used to the old man's eccentricities, M. Georges had not deserted the villa for such a trifle. Still, as he swayed backwards and forwards in his rocking-chair, with his open shirt disclosing his sunburnt throat, pinching the tight-stretched strings of his racket with the tips of his fingers, it made him uncomfortable to feel the austere gaze of the saint resting upon him.

Magloire Dubourg tackled him on several further occasions. M. Georges led the same useless and complicated life as his friends—"The people of my set," he used to say with a fluency that dazzled his mother—and, like them, he considered that he held a superior position in Society because he did nothing. He was always in a hurry, the days were too short for all his engagements, and he was to be met on all the roads,

at the wheel of his motor-car, dashing past the milestones, skimming round the turnings, tooting impatiently at the level crossings; and Yvonne's heart began to beat when she recognised the sound of his horn in the distance.

"How can you be satisfied with such an existence?" asked the saint in naïve amazement. "Does it not humiliate you to think that others are paying for your luxuries, earning your bread for you?"

These constant remarks ended by exasperating Georges Aubernon, who did not dare to make any reply; and his visits became less frequent.

"Frankly," said the novelist to his brother, "you would do better to leave that boy alone. He may well get some pleasure out of life, his father has slaved hard enough."

This false reasoning had irritated the saint still further.

"The son, in the eyes of God, cannot pay his father's debts, but neither will he be able to pay with his father's money."

At the first opportunity he had attacked the young man with fresh reproaches, and after that young Aubernon, feeling humiliated, only showed himself at the King's Domain in the company of his parents. The latter, who suspected nothing, continued to pay every courtesy to the saint; they were very proud to introduce him to friends who came to Barincourt for that special purpose, and but for this attraction very few people would have called on them.

Since the illness of old Moucron, this curiosity had increased still further, and every day people telephoned from Paris to the manufacturers to ask for the latest news.

The news, indeed, was not good. Young Moucron, who did not want to waste such costly drugs, dosed his father equally with the remedies of Dr. Blum or Dr. Rouquette; and the old man, stuffed with iodine, emetics, calomel and opium, only woke up from his

heavy sleep when a fit of coughing or an attack of delirium roused him.

Barlincourt followed the course of the sick man's disease as though he had been a personage of importance; in his gasping breath the old fellow held the whole popularity of the saint.

From time to time, as night was falling, the local correspondent of the *National* or the *Français* might be seen riding up on his bicycle to inquire at the farm whether "it was over"; but old Moucron, hard and dry as an old vine, would not let himself die.

The peasants, among themselves, talked of it in ambiguous terms.

"Young Moucron must find it hard to keep still."

"If only the saint does not take a hand, he's bound to get his six acres."

"And this time he won't have to beat the old man to make him hand over his property."

Then they would all laugh, displaying their rustic amusement, as rough as their own hands.

When old Moucron suddenly ceased to expectorate, Dr. Blum foretold the end.

"Internal secretion," he told his patients as he went his rounds. "It's very serious. That all accumulates in the bronchial tubes; the poor old chap will die of suffocation. I shall begin to give him injections."

Dr. Rouquette also noticed that the patient was coughing less and that he was no longer expectorating; but as his general condition was no worse in other respects, he felt no anxiety, or at least he showed none.

Next day, however, old Moucron was in a high fever and shouting so loud that he could be heard from the road. He wanted to get up, refused to take any food, and in a whining voice jabbered meaningless phrases. Dr. Rouquette, who was as obstinate as his own peasants, was determined not to acknowledge that his rival was in the right, and insisted that these symptoms were a good sign rather than otherwise.

"It is perfectly normal," he explained to the people who had collected round his carriage. "It is a result of peripneumonic fever; we call it sympathetic delirium. Dr. Blum's professors may have changed the name but they haven't changed the disease. . . . Well, good-bye, my friends. . . ."

In reality, however, the doctor was afraid of a stroke. He trusted far more to his old practitioner's instinct than to his science; and when, as he entered the farmer's room, he had sniffed the odour of acetate and pippins that he had so often smelt before, he made a grimace, for he knew what to expect.

"It smells of death. He is done for."

One person alone might now save old Moucron: Saint Magloire. The doctor did not hesitate, if necessary he would have gone to fetch the Bishop, the Pope, the Grand Lama, to save the old man's life and discredit Dr. Blum. A moment later he was at the King's Domain, and, not shrinking from a lie, he told the saint that old Moucron was at the point of death and was asking for him.

"Has he received the Sacraments?" asked the Evangelist anxiously.

"No, he doesn't want to give himself up for lost, you see. He hopes, we hope that if you would . . . your presence. . . ."

Then, finding no way out, Dr. Rouquette finished abruptly with: "In short, science hands him over to you."

So long as there was daylight in his room, old Moucron remained in a painless stupor. Between the bouts of fever, his mind followed the quiet activity of the road, the passing of carts, whose sheaves brushed the walls of his house, the whistles of the factory, the hurried trot of sheep, the rattle of threshing-machines in the barn. The last familiar sound was the return of the cattle, coming home from the pastures. Then night came on and he began to

toss in his bed. Trembling, he entered the realm of delirium.

Sick people know : death hides in shadowy corners. Some watch for it, their eyes wide with fear; others, more cowardly, keep their eyes closed, that they may not see it coming. The fearful soul listens, and after a moment it hears. . . . Not even a sound; a silence that moves. A garment trailing, the floor creaking; it must be coming out of its corner and approaching the bed. . . . You can feel it there, quite near. . . . The silent watcher blows his icy breath over the dying man, who shrinks away. His heart beats with great throbs, but he does not stir, he does not call out, he checks by main force the rattle in his throat, so as not to tempt it. He wants to make Death believe that he is asleep. . . .

One more instant of terrified waiting, then he opens his eyes, cautiously. He looks. . . . No, there is nothing, but the darkness. The room is empty. All at once, with nerves unstrung, the body relapses into utter exhaustion; the stifled rattle once more seizes the sick man by the throat, and the long nightmare of the darkness begins. . . .

Old Moucron struggled till the last moment. With anxious eyes he watched the daylight vanishing through the window with its coarse net curtains. It seemed as though life itself left him as light faded. The fear of death caught hold of him at last.

"Anatole, a candle," he asked.

But the young man, who knew that his father was afraid in the darkness, brought nothing. The voice pleaded with him :

"A candle, Anatole."

The other made no reply. In the living-room the noise of the soup-spoon and the gurgle of wine being poured out could be heard.

The old farmer remembered that, on a by-gone day, it had been his turn to eat in the living-room, while his father moaned in this same bed. The shaft of a

dray had crushed the old man's chest, and he had struggled for more than a fortnight before he died. Now, in his delirium, it was towards himself that the dray rolled, and it was Anatole who was whipping up the horses. He tried to escape, but he could not. Then, suddenly, everything changed. Madame Pelé, wearing a cassock, took him to dance at Dumarchey's, . . . The blood was pounding so hard in his temples that he seemed to hear the bells. He thought :

"If I can only stop seeing the waggon I shall be saved."

But it was useless, the dray always came back; it broke right through the red wall of his nightmare, and Saint Magloire did not dare to come near him because he was afraid of the horses.

"Call the saint, call the saint!" he gasped urgently, his throat rattling.

In the living-room, the son went on placidly with his dinner

When the farmer, after his bout of fever, found himself perspiring between his drenched sheets, he gazed at the thread of light beneath the door, and that calmed him. At such moments the thought of death no longer alarmed him. He waited for it. . . .

Despondently, he let his thoughts wander. After all, how quickly life has passed! Youth is still so near, it seems as though one could touch one's memories just by stretching out a hand. When the first of his comrades had been borne to the cemetery, the men of his own age had come back in a troop, their coats over their arms, telling stories of him who would never return. Then, year by year, they had grown fewer: no more than eight, no more than seven, no more than six. . . . Perhaps it was his turn now. . . . But then, why not Mathieu's?

A violent fit of coughing shook him. A murderous knee crushed his chest, and he relapsed into delirium, his head on fire.

"Anatole! Anatole!"

Young Moucron came at last. The old man did not look at him; he no longer recognised anything. With his mouth drawn to one side, he lay at the point of death. On his white tongue there was a curious spot which puzzled Anatole. Leaning over the dying man he stretched out his big hand and tried to rub the spot away, but it would not come off.

To save trouble, he had dressed his father in a clean shirt, for, once dead, the body stiffens and is difficult to move. The old man was scratching the sheet with his earth-stained hands.

"He is going," the son observed calmly. "There is nothing to do but wait."

He went back to the living-room to get everything ready. He poured a little holy water into a saucer—the old man always kept some in a bottle, to sprinkle his farm with in case of a storm—took from behind the calendar the piece of dried box which was changed every year on Palm Sunday, then set about choosing a sheet for the burial. He took them all out, one after the other, but could not find what he wanted.

"That one's still good. . . . So's that, with a patch. It's all pure linen."

On all fours, he rummaged to the bottom of the cupboard, and the candle, set on the red-tiled floor, threw its full light on his flat face, covered with coarse hair. At last he brought out some yellowed sheeting, carefully folded, worn by washing and made out of pieces. Having unfolded it, he measured it on his arm. With a grimace he muttered:

"My word! It will be rather a tight fit. . . ."

He was kneeling there, irresolute, when the dog in the courtyard began to bark. He heard a step approaching, then a hand lifted the latch. Anatole, grumbling, rose and drew back the bolt, wondering who could be coming so late at night.

"What is it you want?" he cried as soon as he recognised the visitor.

And all at once, instinctively, he half pushed the

door back, barring the opening with his outstretched arm. It was the saint.

"My father's not well," the peasant went on, "he mustn't be disturbed, the doctor said so."

The Evangelist took him by the wrist and lowered his arm without effort.

"It was Dr. Rouquette who sent me," he said. "I want to see your father."

And he passed in. His outline stood out, massive, against the half-light of the little courtyard, like St. Christopher the ferryman upon stained-glassed windows. The peasant stepped aside and eyed him furtively.

"If you've come for the Extreme Unction," he stammered, "there's no hurry. Father's nowhere near dying, certainly not."

The wan light from outside groped along the walls, touching a copper pan, the polished corner of an old piece of furniture, the big calendar. In a dark corner, a fragment of mirror dreamed, with dimmed glance. Upstairs, in the garret, the pigeons could be heard hopping about. And in the next room, the rattling breath of the old man.

"You hear how soundly he's sleeping," said Anatole in a lowered voice.

Shuffling along in the clogs, he went towards the room, to shut the door.

"Let it be," said Saint Magloire imperiously.

Moucron dared not refuse, but, standing between his table and the open chest, he barred the way. His violently beating heart nearly jumped out of his breast.

"The doctor has given orders that he is not to be tired," he grumbled. "I've just given him his draught. . . . He must be left to sleep."

The Evangelist, without replying, took up the candle and came forward. The farmer clenched his fists, his head bent low full of obstinacy.

"What d'you want, any way?" he asked furiously, in a choking voice. "This is no time to come and see sick people!"

And, stepping backward a couple of paces, he abruptly pulled the door to. Magloire Dubourg, holding the candle aloft, said simply :

"You are afraid, eh?"

Anatole remained with his head lowered, to escape from the saint's glance. An ox at rest.

"I don't know what you mean, but you've only got to call again; to-morrow there will be daylight."

The old man watched him without replying, and his silence alarmed the peasant, who held his peace, his thoughts in confusion.

Through the open door the great silence of the fields seemed to enter, haunted with furtive noises, the rustling of trees and the distant barking of dogs.

"Do you hear?" asked the saint, his face close to Anatole's.

No, he could hear nothing. The pigeons, a rattling breath, furniture creaking.

"Your house that is watching you, all the things that are spying on you, don't you hear them? The old furniture that witnessed your birth, the clock where your father notched your height as you grew bigger. . . . Your turn will come too, to die in the old house. . . . Listen, it will creak as it is doing to-night. . . ."

Young Moucron shook himself, blazing up into a passion.

"I am not accountable to anyone," he said, raising his head, "and I tell you once for all you have no business here."

For a moment both were silent. The breathing of the old man filled the dark house, and the dog, in the courtyard, began to howl.

"Come, let me pass," the saint commanded.

This time the young man burst out :

"What," he said in a hoarse voice, "you want to cure him? Well, that's the doctor's business, not yours. I tell you, you shall not go in."

"I shall go in."

And Magloire Dubourg pushed him back. Then Anatole suddenly seized his cudgel and planted himself in a threatening attitude in front of the door.

"I'm in my own house and you shall not go any farther," he shouted. "What right have you to come and worry the old man?"

The saint, without replying, took him by the arm and, sturdy though he was, the peasant felt himself slipping down against the closed door, all his strength gone.

"You have no right," he said in a whining voice; "I'll complain to the police, I'll say you assaulted me."

Magloire Dubourg was already in the bedroom. He had set down the candle on the bed-table, and had taken the icy hand of the dying man between his own. Over his shoulder the son watched him anxiously with rancorous eyes, sawing the air with his helpless hands.

"He's going to heal him," he thought in desperation.

But the rattling breath continued, and the left hand of the sick man went on stroking the sheet in a dying caress. At last the saint stood erect again, and in spite of himself Anatole heaved a sigh.

On the damp forehead, which was already cold, Magloire Dubourg traced the sign of the Cross, then he went back into the living-room, leaving the candle near the bed. Young Moucron shut the door of the lighted room without thinking, and they found themselves suddenly in darkness.

Anatole at once drew back terror-stricken. Before him, on a level with his face, two eyes gleamed, two terrible, phantom eyes. . . . He flung up his arm to protect himself, like a boy. Then, terrified by the movement, the cat, which was perched on the cupboard, jumped down, fell on the chair, and fled. They had been her eyes.

The young man was still trembling on his bandy legs. But by degrees the beating of his agitated heart

calmed down. Very softly, in the low voice of the confessional, the saint said :

"Why should I have prolonged his span of life? Tell me that. To expose him to your hatred? To make him suffer longer?"

Moucron listened with indifference to his words. He was no longer afraid. He stood there with his hands in his pockets, swaying to and fro.

"All the same, you've got a wrong idea of things," he said. "We got on all right together, the old man and I."

On the threshold the Evangelist turned round for the last time :

"You are a parricide at heart ! . . . In another life the black veil will dim your eyes, and it will be sorrow itself that will cut your throat. Farewell !"

He went away in the direction of the Presbytery, and for a moment Moucron looked at his dog, which was sitting in the middle of the courtyard, howling at Death.

"I wonder if it is over?" he said.

He went back into the room. The death-rattle had ceased.

Mme. Baptistine Pelé was hastening along the Rue de Verdun; under her arm she carried something long, wrapped in a newspaper. Tradesmen opening their shops looked at her, amazed.

"There you are ! Baptistine is taking the funeral taper to Moucron. . . ."

As soon as it woke up, Barlincourt heard of the news : old Moucron had passed away. The people of the neighbourhood were so used to seeing the widow hurrying to every death-bed, with an artificial air of consternation and her long stick of wax under her arm, that instead of saying that a sick man was growing worse it had become the custom to announce :

"Baptistine will soon be taking him her taper."

She scented corpses with the instinct of a vulture, and in some unknown way she always managed to be the first to hear when anyone was dead or dying. Weeks had passed since she had been seen with her taper, and when people caught sight of her on that morning there was a general feeling of depression. Death had been stronger than the saint.

The pious widow pursued her way indifferently, rather pleased than otherwise at the defeat of the Evangelist. Besides, she looked on births and deaths with the same dry eye, and derived all her joy from celestial calculations. Near the post office she encountered M. Quatrepomme's tenant, who was coming back from six o'clock Mass. The invalid was walking with the aid of a stick, having acquired new pains in the damp store-house which the Mayor had rented to her as a summer residence.

"Where are you off to, dear lady?"

"To say the prayers for the dead at old Moucron's," whispered the widow.

The other woman tottered and turned pale.

"What, is he dead?"

She felt as though her heart had suddenly grown heavier and would cease to beat, then she would fall down there on the spot and never rise again.

"But what about the saint? . . . The miracles?" she stammered.

Mme. Pelé smiled maliciously.

"The saint, the saint," she said in a strange tone. "To begin with, he is not a saint. No one can be a saint in his life-time. It cannot be done. . . ."

"But what about us sick people?" moaned the invalid.

"In your place," the widow advised her, "I should go to Lourdes. At least that is well-established, there are proofs, the Holy Father has recognised the miracles. Whereas this Magloire . . . To tell you the truth, I have always mistrusted him. . . . Think of it, a man whose brother writes abominable stories

in irreligious papers. And besides, he's really a heretic, it's quite possible he may be excommunicated some day. . . ."

The invalid listened to her railing in silence, her back bowed, her eyes dulled.

"Come, you must pull yourself together," Mme. Pelé said to her. "Look here, come with me and say the prayers for old Moucron."

They trotted along together, and, with tapping stick and black gowns and the long covered taper, they looked like two wicked fairies in search of some evil prank.

The farmers going down to the fields mid the ringing of their iron harrows, the housewives chattering round the pump, the workmen from Aubernon's as they walked by in batches, all gathered to discuss the bad news; and the tolling of the death-bell made a deep impression on them. Old Moucron, in breathing his last, had put them all back into the hands of Destiny; at one blow the inhabitants of Barlincourt would lose all their prestige. It was the end of a beautiful dream. . . .

No one thought of the old farmer, whose liberated spirit still hovered in the blue smoke of the houses, unable to detach itself so soon from the old familiar roofs. What interested them was their own fate, their return to the inevitable law. Some of the old men, frowning, reckoned that they already had more friends among the dead than among the living. The younger ones, care-free, wrangled in the farm-yards.

Only Saint Magloire thought about the dead man, as he let the big beads of the rosary slip through his fingers. He seemed to be following him on that supreme journey. . . .

The old man, forgotten, roamed sadly through the streets, glueing his invisible countenance to the windows of the farms. The beasts scented him, the dogs whining in their kennels, scattered partridges

calling one another in the stubble. . . . It may be that he was waiting for a regret, a single tear, before going on his way. . . . It is so hard to go away for good, to leave the little acre which has held one's happiness. . . .

He was alone already, in the vast unknown of the world, and without a thought to hold him, with no faithful heart to shelter him, he felt himself disappearing, evaporating, like the mist of a pool. To be nothing more, not even a memory. . . .

There can be no resistance. . . . The soul melts in the light. It takes flight with the wind. . . . A rustling in the lime-trees, a slamming door, a weather-vane creaking. Then, nothing more. . . . High up in the bright sky, where swallows tie and untie the slender black ribbon of their flight. . . .

The tale goes that it was a baker in Barlincourt, on the day of the funeral, who hissed for the first time as he passed in front of the King's Domain. The crowd was at once electrified. They began to shout, some for, some against, and the procession entered the cemetery in confusion. A few old peasants and women in mourning alone remained round the grave to listen to the prayers, while the rest of the mourners quarrelled in the pathways of the cemetery. M. Quatrepomme, seeing that things were going badly, made himself scarce before the end, and hastened home, ready to go up and hide himself in the garret in case he should be needed.

In front of the villa, people were squabbling, always egged on by the baker.

"If he had had any heart, he would have come to the funeral, this wonderful saint," cried the fanatic. "Was it not the proper thing for him to do, after he had let the poor old chap die?"

Soon there were more than fifty of them, mostly farmer lads, with a few shopkeepers, vociferating at the gate; and when Milot passed by with Abbé Choisy,

irreverently swinging the funeral holy-water vessel, he gave them a sly grin of encouragement intended to mean : "Go ahead !"

However, they soon grew tired. And besides, although they would not admit it, they were afraid the saint might recognise them, and the demonstration ended at the public-house.

When the Aubernon workmen, as they came out of the factory, heard what had happened, they collected together and started a fresh disturbance; but this time they cheered the saint. By way of a beginning, the demonstrators had smashed in the windows of Bégin the baker, the worst reactionary in the district; then, forming up in marching order, they went and shouted outside the windows of the Mayor, who was nowhere to be found, and they were wending their way tumultuously towards the dwelling of M. Aubernon, pompously known as the *château*, on account of a wretched little turret that adorned it, when Saint Magloire joined them.

He made a speech to them and, not without difficulty, persuaded them to go home, putting himself at the head of the column.

They almost all lived in the Workmen's Dwellings, known as the *Cité*, on the outskirts of Barlincourt. Sixty small brick houses stood there in rows, with grey gardens, all alike, in which sunflowers bloomed. These barracks, which had cost M. Aubernon a good deal of money, had earned him the reputation of a philanthropist, at any rate outside his factory. He let the houses at a moderate rent, but only by the week; so that a workman who was dismissed on a Saturday had to turn out of workshop and home alike at the same time.

"In this way," said the manufacturer, "I keep them in hand."

There was not a gentleman in Barlincourt who would have ventured into the *Cité*, even in broad daylight. The continual disputes, which could be heard from

the high road, the endless stories of fights there, had created a legend that represented the Aubernon Dwellings as a sort of anarchists' lair, and by way of keeping up this reputation, a band of urchins, clad in frocks, used to play all day in front of the barrier, besmeared and dirty, hurling insults at well-dressed children, and practising throwing stones at them.

This was the first time Saint Magloire had been inside the place.

He spoke first on the site of a house that was in course of construction, with the whole multitude around him; then, when the dinner-hour came, he told them to disperse, and he went from house to house, preaching with the utmost simplicity under each roof. These poor people found nothing to say to him in welcome, they were too much moved. It troubled them to see this celebrated man sitting down familiarly under their lamp and talking for them alone. With beating hearts, they listened to him. Outside, all along the hedge, the others were eagerly trying to hear.

"Why do they reproach me with not having prolonged that poor man's life?" asked the Evangelist. "He who would perform such a miracle as that would be a monster, he would be Antichrist. . . . Would it be fair, I ask you, that to the end of Time the rich man, made immortal, should enjoy the same happiness, while the poor man remained always chained to his misery? On the contrary, Death should be blessed, it is the revenge of the humble, it is the justice of God passing by. . . ."

The women turned transfigured faces towards him. Eyes glistened with tears. The saint went up to a workman who wore a crape band round his sleeve and took his hands:

"Don't weep," he said, "Have courage. . . . She is not yet dead, since she survives in you. Throughout the centuries those who have loved seek each other unconsciously in the world, and one day

they meet again. So be kind to everyone. . . . Tell yourselves that there is a soul hidden in the body of your neighbour, and that perhaps some time in the past that soul has suffered for you. . . ."

A militant, who was gnawing the stiff hairs of his moustache as he listened, was the only one who dared to interrupt him. These promises of a distant reward did not satisfy him.

"Since God has put us here on earth," he asked bitterly, "why does He not establish justice?"

Magloire Dubourg looked at him without anger.

"And do you think God ought to take the trouble to distribute to each man his ration of happiness, like you divide the fodder among cattle?" he answered. "Do the bees need you to build their hives and direct their buzzing realm; or the swallows to build their nests, or the ants their subterranean palaces? What would you say if you were to give to some people a castle containing all the treasures of the earth, and if long afterwards the house were still in disorder, with men fighting in it, some lying gorged in the drawing rooms, while others were starving in the attics? Well, God is the Giver, and He sees you cutting each other's throats in His house. . . ."

The workmen listened, fascinated. Open-eyed, they entered into his dream.

"Then," said an old woman whose hands were trembling, "we shall see our dead again, I shall find my boys?"

"You will find them!" promised the Evangelist emphatically. "I vouch for it: death is nothing. . . . What, must everything come to an end just because an outworn heart ceases to beat, because a breast no longer rises and falls? Must the soul, intangible, yet present, which we feel within us, fade into nothingness like our flesh? No, the Divine essence survives. Nothing dies, even when the shovelful of earth has dropped on the coffin, which gives back a sound of emptiness. The soul does not perish: it

leaves its husk like a nomad his shelter, and goes on to taste of perfect rest in the spiritual kingdom. Heaven, radiant abode, beatitude of beatitudes, consolation for all sorrows! In the kingdom of the elect you will not find all the powerful of this life, the rich, the cruel masters, the tormentors of the world. They, humble and despairing, must remain in the mists of lower regions, whence they look with envy on those who have lived righteously and who at last enjoy their reward.

It is up there that the soul is moulded, summing up its good deeds and its sins; for it rises above Time and looks back, as from a mountain-top, on all the road it has traversed, all its former lives. Then there is gnashing of teeth, albeit without fire or torment, at the vision of the blessed heights to which the righteous have attained. The soul vows passionately to sacrifice everything henceforth for the sake of rising one step nearer God, and it is the obscure recollection of such pledges that guides us here on earth. When, in the presence of evil, a faint voice says "Do not do it!" do you believe that it is conscience; conscience is but a vain word: it is your eternal soul that speaks to you, that implores you, for it alone remembers the anguish it has endured on high."

At this moment the old man, breaking off, gazed at them all with his compelling eyes. Then with a sweeping gesture he drew them, panting, closer to him.

"Listen to me. In the cemetery of Favreulles, near here, you know the tomb of the Marquise. More than a hundred years ago, she was buried there by her own desire, with all her jewels, all her precious stones, a useless fortune grown grey and tarnished on her old bones. Well, I saw a poor woman sitting dreaming on that tombstone, pulling up with her worn fingers the grass that grew between the flags. Listen to me! What if that were the Marquise come

back to her tomb? Yes, was it indeed not she? Her reincarnated soul draws her blindly thither, like migrant birds that cross the seas as soon as their wings will bear them, without knowing why. She is hungry, bowed down with misery, she drags herself along the roads dreaming of a hospital where she may rest; and there, close by, under the very stone that she is scratching, lies her fortune: happiness that she has buried, bread, raiment, a warm house, all that she stole from herself when she stole it from others, fool that she was. . . . Well, understand me: we are like the mistress of Favreulles. When we are happy in one life we want to bury happiness with us."

The workmen listened to him, feverishly, with growing exaltation. A new world was opening out before them. One of them, overcome, murmured:

"Ah, if only we had the power for just one moment, then, by God! everything would be changed!"

This oath shocked them all.

"Take care," whispered his wife, "the saint will hear you."

But the old man, full of joy at feeling the hearts of these disciples awakening, noticed nothing. He went away, and those who had been listening to him followed him in a fervent procession. Mathieu, the workman, half-drunk as usual, wept without ceasing.

"Well, since we've got to die, I don't mind," he stuttered. "I may have better luck next time."

And he distributed farewell handshakes around him, saying with an air of bravado:

"Good-bye my friends."

The saint halted as he was passing a little garden. He plucked a velvety jasmine leaf, and rubbing it between his brown fingers, inhaled its fragrance.

"Smell this," he said to the militant workman who had interrupted him, and he handed him the soft perfumed leaf. "You who do not believe in God, don't you see in this a proof of His existence? As for me, everything I see around me cries out to me

that God exists. Smell this fresh scent that clings to one's fingers. What was needed to bring it to life? A fragile seed carried by the wind. The seed falls, and you have this blossoming of perfume and colour. Think what men would have needed to make this penetrating odour and this vivid green, picture to yourself the factories full of complicated machinery, the chemists, the workmen, the pyramids of coal: and the perfume would have been less sweet, the colour less bright. Well, all that great factory, all that science, God puts them all into a seed that is borne on the wing of a bird. . . ."

He spoke, and in the falling dust the bare-armed disciples listened, entranced. There was joy in the air. Happy wives nestled against their husbands, slipping their little cold hands into the big rough ones; mothers, enraptured, held their children close to them, and in every heart fantastic hopes were born.

CHAPTER VIII

ABBÉ CHOISY experienced the most beautiful emotion of his life on the first Sunday when he saw his usually empty church filled to the paupers' bench for High Mass, and recognised at the foot of the pulpit the most desperate characters of the Aubernon Cité. Here were those who generally greeted him with derisive cries, and even Mathieu the workman, who declared that babies ought to be baptized with red wine. At the end of the service the Abbé quickly removed his chasuble and, hastening back to the chapel, embraced Magloire Dubourg in the presence of the whole congregation.

"You have converted them," he stammered. "It is you who have brought all these lost sheep back to God. People may say what they like, you are a saint."

He had immediately forgotten all his doubts and the feelings of mistrust which besieged him whenever he read certain papers that Mme. Pelé brought to him. He was proud that he had resisted and that he had not wavered in his faith in the Evangelist. But his enthusiasm did not last.

These new converts, who were looked at askance by the regular worshippers, were filled with a peculiar and unconventional faith. From the following Saturday onward he had to deal with penitents at confession who did not even know The Lord's Prayer, though they were able to carry on impossible discussions on points of doctrine. They carped at everything, made reservations with regard to the Ten Commandments, and refused without hesitation to believe in Purgatory. Needless to say, they all admitted the transmigration of souls as an essential principle, a heresy which appalled the curé; and they spoke with such eloquence

and conviction, weeping and beating their breasts, that Abbé Choisy, stunned, deafened, bewildered, felt himself unable to cope with them and preferred to grant them absolution at once and so get rid of them.

The parishioners who were waiting their turn and praying in the shadow of the side aisles, listened in horror to these lamentations and outbursts, and wondered with a shudder what unpunished crimes could give rise to such confessions.

One morning, in the middle of the service, a scandalous scene occurred. A woman—a factory hand—who knelt sobbing on her prie-dieu, suddenly rose and, turning towards the congregation, began confessing her sins aloud, like the Christians of old. Her neighbours in dismay endeavoured to make her sit down, but she roughly pushed them aside and went on with renewed ardour, proclaiming her faults with abhorrence. Finally, to make her stop, Milot had to lead her outside, which was much better for her own sake, for her husband's, and for that of various other people in the parish. This incident made the worst possible impression on the regular worshippers, people of staunch faith; and Baptistine Pelé, with fresh audacity, undertook a stealthy campaign against the disciples of the saint.

She did not dare to side openly against the Evangelist, but her aim was to drive away from "her" church all these rowdy converts, who seemed to feel quite at home in it and did not recognise her authority. As she knew Mass by heart, she rose, sat down, and knelt before anybody else, even forestalling the responses; and like an old hen, her cruel eye scanned the submissive herd of those who followed her example without trying to understand, and crossed themselves indiscriminately as soon as she gave the signal. She sang all the hymns and canticles at the top of her voice, trying to shame the new-comers by pretending never to look at the book; and when the consecrated bread

was being distributed she kept her eyes on the basket, as though she believed that all of them were capable of trying to lay in supplies from it. She sought every means of mortifying the converts from the Cité; and she set about it so adroitly, with hypocritical smiles and an air of trying to do a service, that it was impossible to find a pretext for being angry with her.

Fortunately, if the parents dared not protest, the youngsters were bolder; and whenever they met the widow at dusk after catechism, they escorted her home and shouted horrid innuendoes at her.

These young rascals, who had only been going to church since the conversion of the Cité, were recruits of little value. They only served to create disorder. They were jealous of the sons of the country-folk and tradespeople, and revenged themselves by repeating to them that they were just as good as they were, and that their turn would come *next time* to have fathers rolling in money. When the well-dressed ones sneered, they kicked them fiercely under the benches and stole the pictures out of their prayer-books.

It was Yvonne Dubourg who, to please her uncle, coached all these urchins in the catechism. She was the only person who could keep them in order. They all knew her, having often seen her at the Dispensary in the Cité, where she helped Mme. Aubernon; it was she who dressed their aching little hands, which were covered with those sores from which only the children of the very poor suffer. As she spoke gently to them, making the smaller ones laugh and flattering the elders, they were on their best behaviour with her. Sometimes, however, she did not come, and Joséphin Pelé looked after them; and then catechism turned into pandemonium. Feeling that this big trembling simpleton was at their mercy, old pupils and new leagued themselves maliciously against him; they shoved each other, squalled, gave idiotic answers to make the others laugh, and, from hiding places, threw

moth-worms at his back, incited thereto by the one-legged sacristan, who exulted in the discomfiture of Joséphin.

At last Abbé Choisy grew unhappy at this continual agitation, and began secretly to regret his deserted church of by-gone days, with the thinly-scattered flock which had been so easy to lead. It was not to him that all these fanatics came : it was not even to God ; it was the saint who drew them. Urged on by the Widow Pelé, he at last decided to inform the Bishop of all these incidents and to ask for guidance ; but the Vicar-General, who received him, only exhorted him to be patient and gave him no instructions. The Church, to avoid a scandal, preferred for the moment to ignore the doings of Magloire Dubourg.

The Evangelist often called his disciples together. The meetings took place either in the Cité, after supper, at the hour when the houses dream in the fading day and the lights come slowly out, or else in the dusky fields on the borders of the Bois Noisette. The couples stretched on the grass or seated along the hedges kept their eyes fixed on Magloire's face : he spoke, and all the converging glances, like taut strings, seemed to draw new vitality from him. At first they listened attentively, trying to understand everything ; but little by little their attention wandered, as though blunted ; the meaning of the words no longer reached them. It was as if the Voice bewitched them. They were bewildered and could only catch hold of a word here and there : happiness . . . grace . . . goodness . . . , which their eyes seemed to gather from the lips of the saint ; and incoherently their dreams floated round his sayings. A mysterious power emanated from the old man's ecstasy, and in the night its boundaries stretched as far as his voice could carry ; when he fell silent his audience remembered nothing, and only felt within themselves a mighty desire for love and atonement.

Often, too, the saint explained the Gospel to small

groups at a time, in the houses; and if on the following Sunday the same passage happened to be commented on from the pulpit, the poor Abbé would see his parishioners staring at him with contemptuous grimaces, which clearly meant "Pooh, pooh ! not brilliant !"

In proportion as the saint's popularity grew in the Cité, it diminished in the rest of the countryside. Everything he did—and he did nothing but good—exasperated the majority of the inhabitants, specially the big farmers, the shopkeepers and the pensioned employees. All these good people preferred an order of things based on the poverty of others to all the happiness which might arise out of an upheaval. When Saint Magloire asked the Town Council to place the parish meadow, which yielded no income, at the disposal of tramps, so that the best of them could settle down, his request called forth general condemnation. The peasants were convinced that they would be robbed—"as if we hadn't enough to put up with, with these dirty factory folk !"—and the day-labourers complained that the object of the scheme was to take the bread out of their mouths. Later, the old man suggested to the curé, whom the proposal left speechless, that all the children should be dressed in cassocks for their first Communion, so that rich and poor might look alike at God's Table; and the Widow Pelé went about telling every one in Barlincourt that "Magloire Dubourg was surely jealous of the honour rendered to the Lord."

Even the very words of the Nazarene in Saint Magloire's mouth scared the most pious among them like a call to riot; and when the Evangelist in the course of a harangue flung out Christ's terrible warning, "I am not come to bring peace upon the earth but a sword," people timidly repeated the threat to each other, wondering whether the gendarmes were not at last going to interfere. Sometimes the Evangelist took upon himself to act as Justice of the Peace, and settled quarrels without even waiting to be asked.

He entered the wine-shops on Saturdays and made the men go home, which led to a formal complaint being lodged by a publican. Finally he called one day on a rich peasant who was intending to evict one of his tenants and spoke to him so sternly that the other fell to the floor in a fit.

By this time people in Barlincourt were afraid of the saint and his band of disciples. Though the women in the Cité now sang hymns instead of popular songs, no one dared to venture there after dark. Nothing was more startling at night than to hear the invisible murmur of the praying crowd drawing near on the dark road, on its way back from the meetings. People gave them a wide berth, and the dogs in the yards started howling.

M. Quatrepomme, more prudent than ever, took good care not to intervene publicly, but, without saying anything, he despatched complaint after complaint to the Prefecture. The Aubernons also, although they were on good terms with the Dubourgs, were beginning to feel anxious. The manufacturer found that his men were changed, and "ready to play dirty tricks." His wife confined herself to duty calls on her neighbours, and only paid these to please their Paris friends, who always asked to be taken to the King's Domain. M. Georges, who had been cut to the quick by the rebuffs he had received from the saint, only came on Sundays when his mother's guests made their pilgrimage.

Yvonne waited for these afternoons with feverish impatience, and after lunch was finished she found it difficult to sit still. She ran out to meet all the visitors, so that she could do the same thing when the Aubernons arrived and talk for a moment to Georges, walk at his side, hear his voice speaking for her alone.

"You never come now," she reproached him softly, with averted eyes.

"Is it my fault?" he retorted touchily. "Your uncle pulls such a face at me. . . . It annoys me every bit as much as it does you, I assure you."

These few insignificant phrases, which they exchanged without her daring to look at him, represented to her the happiness of a whole week. On other days, when she went to the Dispensary, or to the station, she walked slowly and would go far out of her way in the hope of meeting the young man. She always contrived to go out at the time when he was returning from tennis, and as soon as she caught sight of him, bareheaded, in the midst of his friends, she would feel herself blushing and would turn quickly into the first side-street; or else she would pass by, almost running, giving him a little scared nod without raising her eyes. She had sometimes been walking for an hour just for that greeting.

The peasants, whose sharp eyes discern all that one is anxious to hide, had quickly seen through this manoeuvre.

"She is running after him, the saint's niece," they said jokingly. "The curé will hear some fine tales one Saturday."

The child recalled with a bitter delight the beautiful summer afternoons they used to spend together before the saint's arrival. She remembered their games, the cosy hours they had spent in the drawing-room where, leaning over her, he turned the pages of Schumann's melodies; their wild races through the Park, from which she returned with her fair hair clinging to her forehead, and sometimes their hands interlacing as they tied up a bunch of flowers.

In the morning, as Georges often went to their friends at the Châtaigneraie, she would watch for him at the railings, and would speak to him from between the ivy which she had pulled aside. She had prepared reproaches with which to overwhelm him; but her black eyes, soft and timid, hidden in the foliage like a squirrel's, seemed to be giving the lie to all she said. M. Georges took fire at this tender game. Now that they only met in secret his feelings were quite different from what they had been before. The bars which

separated them made him long to clasp her in his arms. Across the railing he took hold of her hands, then of her slender arms, and covered them with hurried kisses, while with head thrown back and closed eyelids she timorously withheld her mouth.

"Come with me to the Châtaigneraie," he said to her, his breath burning her cheek. "We will say that we met by chance."

She refused, shamefaced.

"Oh, no, I should never dare!"

"Then," he insisted, "come this afternoon to the Bois Noisette. I'll be there at four o'clock."

She still refused, her legs weakening under her, her hands limp. She dreaded these rendezvous which at one time she would have accepted with no thought of evil.

"Well, then, good-bye," the young man said curtly.

And, nibbling a very bitter ivy leaf which he had plucked, he went off, with his springy step, while she, leaning her forehead against the bars, with two heavy drops of sorrow in her eyes, watched him disappearing.

She was so unhappy that she ended by giving in; one day she joined the young man in the Bois Noisette. She went again a few days later, and soon it became a regular practice.

"We are not doing any harm," M. Georges said to her, feeling that she was nervous and worried. "As long as your uncle is here we shall not be able to meet at your house."

Every night, when she went up to her room after dinner, still stirred by the words of the saint, she swore to herself that she would not return to the wood; but as soon as she was in bed, the day she had just spent passed before her in the haze of impending sleep, and she could think of nothing but her happiness. She compelled herself to keep awake a moment longer in order to think of Georges, to see him again, to repeat his loving words to herself.

They sat among the ferns; little insects sometimes

ran over her white stockings and made her cry out. She noticed pearls of sweat on Georges' forehead and wiped them off with the tips of her fingers.

He was stretched out in front of her, half raised on his elbows, gazing at her. He had beautiful brown eyes, shining like chestnuts, and when their faces drew closer together she could see her own image in them, the dark mass of the trees, the infinity of the sky: the whole world was contained in that beloved mirror.

When he clasped her more tightly, when he opened her timid hands, when he tried to take hold of the restive little head, she struggled for a moment, then, cravenly, she yielded. . . . She felt the caress of his long eyelashes on her neck, the touch of his fingers on her bare arms, then between the buttons of her bodice. . . . He spoke to her, in a very low voice, pressing her against him:

"I would like to feel that you are entirely mine, to take you. . . . No, do not draw back. I adore you, my little love. . . . I don't want you to be afraid of me, Yvonne. For you will be my wife. . . . You will, won't you, Yvette, be my little wife? Oh, you will see how I shall love you. . . . Don't move! Stay just like that. I love you so much, so much!"

And with closed eyes, curled up in her virginal bed, she still seemed to feel the rough arm that held her, the hand which slowly bent back her head, the mouth which sought hers. . . . She wished she could have gone to sleep with all those kisses. . . .

In the morning, when Yvonne walked across the garden to post herself at the railings and watch for Georges, she often met Petit Louis, engaged in mowing the grass. The under-gardener did not seem to notice her; yet he did not take his furtive glance off her, and as soon as she had disappeared behind the lilac bushes, he cut through the park, stooping down and parting the branches as he went. His rubber-soled shoes slid noiselessly over the fragrant twigs that dropped

from the firs, and kneeling behind a shrub, motionless, with bated breath, he spied on her. In the afternoon, in the Bois Noisette, he repeated this performance.

The jail-bird felt a bitter joy as he watched the girl grow daily weaker, almost ready to yield. He fervently longed for more urgent caresses, where he might catch a glimpse of her bare skin, a little of her costly under-linen. The first time that he discovered the young people in a glade, exchanging a real kiss, their bodies crushed together, it seemed to him as if he himself were giving that kiss. He dreamt that his arms were about Yvonne's supple waist, and, raising himself on his hands, panting, he urged them on with all his will, hoping to see them fall down on the grass before him. But the arm relaxed its hold; the girl ran away without looking back.

"Sold!" whispered the rough, furiously.

When he came upon one of these scenes he was disturbed for the rest of the day, and his heart was full of envy. Lolling in the moss, with a blade of grass between his teeth, he built up a dream, in which he was dressed like the other man, talking with ease and using words he did not understand. Between the branches he saw Yvonne pass by, crowned with misty light by the sun, and he had not the courage to go on working, with his flesh tormented and his heart seething with rancour.

"What are you doing there?" the saint asked him one day when he discovered him lying among the ferns.

Petit Louis stood up, vexed.

"I am not doing any harm," he growled, with his eyes on the ground. "A fellow needs a bit of a rest, I'm not a machine."

He stood with bowed head, his teeth showing a little between his thin lips, like a frightened dog.

"I am not reproaching you, my lad," the old man said to him. "Come along with me for a little, will you? I am going to see my bees."

They walked side by side to the kitchen garden.

"Are you happy here?" Magloire Dubourg asked him bluntly.

Adèle's nephew shook his head and answered "No."

"Why?"

Petit Louis shrugged his shoulders uncertainly.

"I don't know. . . . I suppose I started all wrong. All those convictions did me harm. . . ."

The saint watched him sadly.

"Listen to me, my lad. You have no right to despair and grow bitter. You must resist evil, reject temptation and tear out your heart rather than give way. Do you hear me?" And the old man took Petit Louis by the shoulders to compel him to look him in the face. "Nothing can force you to do wrong, and if an evil spirit is within you, you must overcome it."

At that moment the Evangelist noticed a sort of mark on the narrow forehead of the youth, and with the tip of his finger he pushed aside the tangled hair.

"What is this? Tattooing?"

"Yes," Petit Louis admitted, turning away his eyes.

"What is written on it?"

The boy's voice grew still more husky:

"For Deibler,"¹ he answered.

The words, indeed, were to be read above his eyebrows, in blue letters, and the saint gently passed his hand across them as though he believed that in this way he could erase them.

Every day about three o'clock Petit Louis walked up to the Bois Noisette with a wheelbarrow filled with herbs, and seated in that soft chair of verdure he waited for Julie and smoked a cigarette. Baptistine's maid did not keep him waiting long; she took the short cut across the fields. Then he crammed into her hod the convolvulus and the dandelions which he had picked for her in the morning, and they had a

¹ Deibler: the French executioner.

good hour of freedom left, which they spent lying under the trees. It was the girl who had suggested that Petit Louis should pick the food for the rabbits beforehand. This prevented Mme. Pelé, who allowed roughly an hour for Julie's task, from becoming suspicious. In this way the boy was encouraged, much as he disliked work, willingly to undertake the picking every morning, while he rejoiced at the thought that he was getting the better of the widow.

Petit Louis and Julie had known each other from childhood; they had been brought up on two neighbouring farms as wards of the *Assistance Publique*, and had met as tiny tots on the benches of the school and in the fields where they romped. While they were still learning to spell, their mutual wretchedness formed a bond between them. The other children despised them for belonging to the *Assistance*, and one day they had clung together and wept while the little peasants danced round them singing :

“Oh ! they have no father !
Oh ! they have no mother !”

They did not talk much to the others : they were considered sly. They always went about together. It was said that they were up to mischief. The school-master did not like them and the curé had dismissed Petit Louis from the catechism.

At the age of ten the boy already knew how to fight : he was driven to it; and during the last years spent with their foster-parents, Julie and he were left in peace, for the little peasants, who were cowardly enough, kept out of their way.

“Us two,” said Petit Louis to his little friend, “we come from Paris. When we are grown up we'll go back there.”

He was the only one who went back, having run away at fifteen from the metal-beater who employed him; and Julie did not hear from him for several

years. Then—a few months ago—they met again by chance at Barlincourt. Petit Louis had been convicted four times, forbidden to live in Paris, and declared liable to deportation on his next offence. He was known as “The Lath,” and was now a young bandit, ready for anything.

At the time of his last conviction, a housebreaking affair in the suburbs, he had had as counsel a friend of the Dubourgs, and it was in this way that, by a strange chain of circumstances, Adèle had found her nephew, the little boy whom his parents had handed over to the *Assistance Publique* at two years of age, and whom she had sought in vain since her sister's death. The delicate baby, whom she used to cover with kisses as she unswathed him, had grown into this sly young ruffian; and the servant's despair had been so great that her employers had consented to take the boy into their service when he left prison, in the hope that he might reform. However, the regular life which he now led had not changed him, and his aunt was always in fear that he might suddenly go back to Paris and resume his evil ways.

When the poor woman gently reproached him, Petit Louis answered in his drawling voice :

“It isn't my fault. . . . I am not bad at heart, but I'm made that way.”

His slouching gait, his slang, his nickname, even his way of smoking, with the stump of his cigarette stuck to his lip, had all dazzled Julie, who detested the peasants and their clumsy manners. She listened open-mouthed to his Parisian reminiscences, and she who since childhood had been broken in to servitude in every shape and form, at last understood the meaning of happiness : lazy mornings in bed in furnished rooms; Sundays under the arbours of Nogent where you eat fried fish; the little bars of the Boulevard Ornano, where the men play cards amid the jangling noise of barrel-organs; evenings at the cinema or the music-hall; and balls in the smoky atmosphere of

La Chapelle, with the couples whirling round to the strains of an accordion.

Later, when she was of age, they would both lead that sort of life: they had sworn it. Petit Louis spoke crudely of the kind of work he expected from her, and of what he would do on his side.

"The struggle to get the grub, eh? you understand?" he repeated at every sentence.

He spoke awkwardly, hunting for the words he needed, and the effort wrinkled his forehead.

"The b . . . shame of it," he often said, "is that here I am losing my connections."

And he spoke of going up "on the quiet" some Saturday to take a look round in Paris.

"But you have no right, you are forbidden to go there," she whispered, terrified. "If you were caught. . . ."

"Don't you worry, we know how to wangle it."

And he added with cynical pride:

"All the same, there aren't so many of my age that are down to be deported!"

Every night when she had finished washing up and was supposed to be in bed, Julie went out to Petit Louis. Without anger, resigned to her lot, she told him the troubles of the day:

"The mistress wants to call me with a whistle now, like a dog; she says I don't hear on purpose. . . ."

These confidences made Petit Louis turn pale with rage.

"And why does she make you take a hod when you go for fodder?" he grunted. "You are not a rag-picker."

"She won't let me take a proper basket," the girl answered timidly. "She says it's the spirit of pride."

"The Lath" often spoke of the saint. His conversations with the old man made him feel uneasy. For the first time in his life a glimmer of thought came to birth in his dull brain.

"I am not a fool, eh?" he said to Julie, "but there's some things I don't understand. I can't get them

into my head. It's as if I was sleeping while I'm being talked to."

What had struck him most was the saint's voice saying: "Nothing can force you to do wrong," and his compelling glance, his powerful grip.

"I tell you, it's no bunkum, he frightened me. . . . Now, what do you think? Why did he tell me that?"

The wastrel also talked about Yvonne and Georges. He sometimes made Julie hide with him behind the hazel-trees, and together they watched the arrival of the young people, who came by the sunken path.

"Look at her beautiful hair," he whispered.

At a distance they could not hear what the lovers were saying to each other, but they saw M. Georges drag the girl away. He seemed to be laughing at her and she, ashamed of her fear, making up her mind all of a sudden, followed him, climbing the slope, where the blackberry bushes caught at her skirt.

When they had disappeared in the thicket, Petit Louis crawled in their wake, still hoping to see something. After a moment he came back, disappointed, and sat down again on his wheelbarrow. He kept silent, his eyes gleaming; perhaps he was thinking. . . .

"You'd look better if you had fair hair," he said suddenly to his mistress one day.

Julie shrugged her shoulders.

"I can't change myself, can I?"

But when an idea once penetrated under Louis's narrow brow it was like a big stone against which he continually stumbled. He returned to the subject later.

Up till now he had never noticed the chestnut hair of the little maid-of-all-work, but suddenly he could think of nothing else.

"I swear to you you'd look better. . . . That, and a beautiful striped dress, now wouldn't you make a splash?"

Julie, too, ended by thinking about it, and for the first time she noticed that her hair was dull and dry,

with no suppleness or gloss in it. She also looked at her frock, supplied by the *Assistance Publique*, made of common blue print, and the horrible black straw hat, belonging to the uniform, which her mistress made her wear on Sundays to humiliate her. It made her feel thoroughly ashamed.

"Why do you talk to me about it?" she sighed, "when it isn't possible."

But Petit Louis stuck to his idea. To tempt her he talked of the jealousy of the other girls and of the sensational entry they would make at the Dumarchey ball, she quite fair and "well turned out," with high heels and silk stockings, like a "Paris madam." He insisted that she should dye her hair.

"Say yes, and I'll buy you a lovely dress," he repeated.

But Julie did not dare. When he came on certain nights to her attic, just above the widow's room, they sat on the folding bed and talked in hushed tones. Petit Louis removed his boots so that he should not make a noise, and they made love and quarrelled in silence, without a sound.

Each time the dispute started afresh.

"If you don't do as I say," Louis threatened in a whisper, "I'll throw you over and I'll play some trick on the old hag so that she'll send you away."

At last, too weak to hold out against him, the little servant gave in.

"I don't care," she murmured one evening. "The mistress can say what she likes."

"Come, come, she can't eat you with her false teeth."

One Saturday Petit Louis went off to Paris, changing trains at Gisors because he imagined he was being watched on the Northern Railway by the special police. He returned with a large parcel: some dress material, shoes, stockings, ribbons, and a large bottle of peroxide. All his money had gone in these purchases.

"I am cleaned out," he told her. "But I declare you'll be a toff!"

With the help of a girl friend who said she had learned sewing at a dressmaker's, Julie made her frock herself. Only, instead of placing the blue stripes lengthwise they set them horizontally, so that the charity girl, who was naturally dumpy, looked as though she were cut in slices like a Bologna sausage.

Petit Louis was present at the fitting.

"What did I tell you?" he cried triumphantly, in spite of the stripes. "You look different already."

The following Saturday was the great day. There was a night ball at Dumarchey's for the Barlincourt festival, and the Pelés were dining with the lady from Paris, who limped more and more the longer she waited for the miracle.

When Julie, whom they all knew as a shabby little maid-of-all-work, in clumsy shoes and a gleaner's bonnet, entered the dancing-hall, with yellow hair, a short skirt and a black ribbon tied round her neck, no one recognised her. They thought at first that "The Lath" had brought a woman from Paris.

Milot was the first to cry out :

"Why, it's Baptistine's maid !"

Then all the dancers flocked up, screaming with joy, and the last comers climbed on chairs to have a look at the phenomenon. People shouted and laughed : the music had to stop playing. The little servant, suddenly ashamed of her short skirts and her hair, stood dazed in the middle of the circle, pressing close to her lover. In spite of her provocative dress, she looked sick and miserable, and, confronted with a score of red faces splitting with indecent laughter, she was on the verge of tears. Petit Louis was not angry : on the contrary, he was smiling, as though he were flattered by this success.

The one-legged beadle shook him by the hand :

"Well done, old boy ! That will strike them dumb, these stick-in-the-muds. I declare, I respect you !"

The workmen at once agreed that Julie looked much better in her new clothes, and the labourers, the farm

hands, who had despised her because she looked poor, began gazing at her with a shade of deference and vague desire now that she looked like a woman of the streets. Only the girls, who were jealous, went on sneering at her.

"Well now, isn't she a guy!"

It was when she caught their envious glances that Julie suddenly realised what she was. She espied herself in the big tarnished looking-glass which decorated the far end of the room, and found it difficult to recognise herself, so wonderfully was she transformed. Instinctively, as if her altered appearance had infused a new soul into her, she preened herself and put on a suggestive smile. Then she followed Louis to the bar, with her hand on her hip, swaying as she walked. Instead of syrup and lemonade she ordered some cheap brandy, which she swallowed at a gulp, with her throat burning, and then she began to dance, her feet turning over on her high heels. From the adjacent wine-shop the drinkers ran in to watch her, hardly able to believe their eyes.

At ten o'clock she was already tipsy; she sang as she waltzed, with locks of hair straggling into her eyes, and she kissed "The Lath" right on the mouth and called him "my kid." When her friend the dress-maker advised her to go home, she rebelled.

"If the old woman wants me she can come and ask for me," she declared, as she put on some rouge before the mirror.

They all agreed with her, hoping meanwhile that things would turn out badly.

A quadrille was just beginning and Julie had taken her place, pinching her skirt and pulling it up above her knees, when an apparition paralysed the two musicians: Baptistine Pelé had entered the dancing-hall. The dancers stood still, taken aback, and stared at mistress and maid. The widow remained in the doorway; she was pale, and her eyes blazed wickedly. Her cheeks were quivering with passion.

She scanned the girls, trying to find Julie. Peals of laughter began to ring out, and the lads nudged each other.

"Ah!" said Mme. Pelé. "Ah! Satan!"

She had only just recognised her servant and she stared at her, open-mouthed, bewildered, almost afraid. In her eyes it was witchcraft, a trick of the Devil.

Julie stood with her arms dangling at her sides, livid in spite of her make-up, her hair clinging to her damp forehead, and under the crude glare of the gas she showed the distorted face of a barmaid surprised by a police raid. She wiped her face with her hand, and the black of her eyelashes spread over it. Her lips were quivering.

"That will do," said Petit Louis, drawing near. "What do you want with my girl?"

The old woman did not flinch. She spoke with a hiss, without opening her lips:

"To prison!" she raved. "Both of you! You good for nothing. . . . Snake. . . . A wretch born in the gutter I tried to save! Here, Julie!"

The maid obeyed, whimpering; she looked hideous, and the men, whose desire she had provoked before with her swaggering airs, now meanly sneered at her.

"The Lath" tried to stop her.

"You're not thinking of going, are you?"

But the widow had already taken Julie by the arm, and Milot and other friends caught hold of Petit Louis.

"No nonsense. . . . You know the risk."

The wastrel, allowing himself to be held back, struggled and shouted.

"I won't have her touched," he bellowed. "Leave me alone, I want to do her in; I'll slash her open like an old mattress. . . ."

The widow did not hear him: she was going off with her sobbing maid, and to drown the wrangling, the cornet, puffing out his cheeks, went on with the quadrille.

By the following day, the whole of Barlincourt knew of the scandal. Small crowds even formed in front

of the Pelés' house, where people hoped to catch a glimpse of "the Doll," as Julie had been nicknamed.

At the King's Domain the affair gave rise to a terrible scene. François Dubourg said that he had had quite enough of it, that he would not keep a convict in his employ any longer; his indignant brother reproached him harshly, Mme. Dubourg intervened with appeals, Yvonne wept. . . . As for Adèle, she was in despair, her eyes red with weeping, unable even to cook the lunch. The novelist caught at the opportunity and departed, slamming the doors.

Julie was not seen for a week, except by chance through the curtains. The widow had kept her in the house, and Joséphin, with his inane smile, refused to say anything. Petit Louis prowled uneasily round the house, and Julie from her kitchen watched him with tear-dimmed eyes.

At last, one evening, regardless of the risk, she half-opened the door and ran to the corner of the street to kiss him. The boy had a shock when he saw her.

"Oh! . . . What has she done to you?"

The girl murmured "Yes," and, with her arms hanging down and her mouth open, she began to weep with the long-drawn-out wail of a child.

Her golden hair was gone. Baptistine had cut it off. With her shaven head, her white face and her swollen eyes, she stood sobbing before her lover, whose only inclination was to laugh.

"You do look a sight!" he said.

The little girl moaned louder and threw herself mournfully into his arms, nestling her grotesque head against his shoulder.

"No, don't laugh at me! I am too miserable. . . ."

Clumsily but lovingly he embraced her, caressing her bare neck; and he no longer thought of making fun of her, now that he felt her sobs rising and falling against his breast. He felt no pity, but a dull rage hardened his heart.

"The w . . . the old w . . . !" he growled.

Between her tears Julie was telling him that she had been obliged to submit, that the widow threatened to send her back to the *Assistance* and lodge a complaint against her; and that she kept insulting her all day long.

Suddenly she heard a window opening and tore herself from her lover's arms.

"It's her," she stammered. "Good-bye!"

And she disappeared at a run. Louis did not see her until the following Sunday: Baptistine Pelé dragged her to ten o'clock Mass—a thing she had never done before—to exhibit the chastened and humbled girl to the whole community. Hardly anything could be seen beneath the hat, which, being now too large, flopped down to her eyebrows; but behind, the nape of the neck showed a bald space, and people burst out laughing, while urchins shouted "Yah! Yah!" after her. This walk, during which she was turned into a laughing stock, proved an unending torture to Julie, but she said nothing; she did not even weep any more, though her poor shamed back bent under the general derision.

Petit Louis, from the wine-shop, saw her passing by, and threw his glass on the floor to relieve his fury. His face wore such a look that the Dumarchey girl turned her eyes aside and swept up the pieces without daring to say a word.

"The Lath," who in the end had been dismissed by M. Dubourg, left the King's Domain that same evening. Adèle was beside herself with grief.

"I simply can't understand the master sending you away," she lamented. "He used to be so easy-going, so kind. . . . He is a different man since his brother came back. He said that he had had enough of this scandal."

"And what did the saint say?"

"Oh, he . . . he is like God Himself!"

She took out a hundred-franc note and handed it to her nephew.

"He told me to give you this meanwhile. And that he wanted to see you and talk to you, that he would find work for you, that you were not to get bitter. . . ."

Petit Louis listened with bowed head.

"Kids like me, you see," he mumbled indistinctly, "instead of chucking them over to the *Assistance*, the parents ought to drown them. They'd be less unhappy. . . . Well, good-bye, Auntie, I'll come back and see you some time this week."

"The Lath" went to live with the Trembler in a hovel plastered with mud, and began to look for work, but only in a half-hearted fashion. At the Aubernon works the overseer refused to take him on, saying that he had received orders to that effect. Petit Louis roved silently, at random, through the streets, or else he wandered by himself in the Bois Noisette. In the evening, he attended the saint's meetings. Magloire Dubourg often took him aside and gave him good advice. These were moments of rare comfort for the vagrant: the words numbed what brain he had, and with his mind empty of thought he felt reassured and confident.

More often than not he did not understand the saint's sermons; even the simplest parables were too deep for him. However, one discussion about Mme. Pelé fixed itself in his memory.

A convert said:

"She is a firm believer, and yet a rotten woman."

Magloire Dubourg answered:

"He who prays is not always pious, he who complains does not always suffer. God will judge by the heart, not by the lips. Do not envy the fate of that false Christian, her debt grows heavier every day, and for her very salvation, it would be better for her to die."

Without knowing it, Saint Magloire had signed the death-warrant of the bigot.

"The Lath" still saw Julie in secret. Some nights

he went up to her room as of old, climbing in at the kitchen window, which the maid left open; and, seated on the little bed, their roughened hands clasped, they talked in low tones, he muttering his rage, she choking back her tears.

"No matter if I half kill myself with work, she wants to send me back to the *Assistance* with a letter where she'll tell everything. She says she won't have me corrupting her son. . . . Then they'll put me under supervision in some form, to clean the cattle-sheds."

Her companion did not reply. Gazing vaguely before him, he was trying to think it over.

"Tell me, my dear, what shall we do?" she whispered distractedly. "And you out of work, too!"

Petit Louis shook his head:

"The saint was speaking of her the other day. . . . He was saying it would be better for her to die."

"Pooh!" breathed the girl. "Don't you count on that."

"Remains to be seen. . . ."

Day by day Petit Louis grew gloomier and gloomier, and his aunt was frightened. When he came to see her she watched him anxiously, and by degrees she gave him all her money, thinking it might keep him from going wrong. Julie also noticed his air of abstraction.

"What's the matter with you?" she asked him at last, one night when he was even gloomier than usual.

"I'm fed up with it all," he burst out. "If the saint was to go back to his niggers and I hadn't got you, I'd go off with him. Don't you see, it's getting near time for my military service. They'll put me in the African troops. Well, I don't feel like it. I don't want to leave my bones in the Kef!"

"But then, what will you do?" wailed Julie. "You aren't going to leave me here?"

He shook his head.

"No, what we need is enough cash for the two of us.

To go away, a long way off, so that they can't find us again."

She nodded her acquiescence, all her will-power gone.

"You haven't heard the saint preach his sermons. . . . Well, he says one hasn't got the right to keep everything for oneself, and that happiness belongs to everybody. Well, then, why should Baptistine sleep on her money-bags while I rot at Bel Abbès and you slave in some farm? Tell me that!"

"Don't talk so loud, she'll hear you," implored the maid, terrified.

Petit Louis had risen to his feet.

"I don't care a damn!"

He was livid. The lamp lighted up his face from below, and the faded tattooing reappeared on his stubborn forehead. The girl looked at him, trembling.

"What have you got there in your pocket?"

"Nothing," he answered, pulling his coat together.

Then he surveyed her for a moment.

"Get your things ready," he said simply.

The four words were enough. She felt as though a weight had fallen on her shoulders and was crushing her. All her strength left her. There was not a drop of blood in her limbs, and her teeth began to chatter.

"What are you going to do?" she asked hoarsely.

He did not answer. Julie, haggard, shuddered from head to foot.

"Petit Louis! Petit Louis!" she cried in a husky voice.

But he had left the room already, and she heard his step as he went down the stairs. She dropped on her knees by her bedside, overwhelmed, and murmured:

"My God! My God!"

She started suddenly: below she had heard a creaking sound, a door being opened. . . . Clenching her teeth, burying her nails in her flesh, she stifled a groan of terror.

"My man!"

She lay down, quivering, and put her ear to the floor. She was biting her lips. She wished she could have shut her eyes, so that she could listen more intently, but she could not do it; against her will her eyes opened wide with terror, and within the circle of light which her lamp sent forth she could see the trembling of her thin hand. Her whole heart, her whole life, were watching.

Only she, in the silence of the night, could catch those furtive noises: by that almost imperceptible creaking she could follow the dreadful progress towards the bed. . . . Oh! she started up. . . . She had just heard a heavier step, a leap. . . . Then a hoarse cry, quickly stifled, and then the deadened noise of a struggle, the sound of two people breathing, a foot or a fist that thudded against the wall, in a supreme convulsion.

The noise died down. . . . She felt the strain of her body relaxing. A feeling almost of relief came upon her. . . . It was over. . . .

But at that moment a terrible shriek rang through the house: the old woman was calling for help. She had probably freed herself from the murderous grasp, she could be heard rushing about the room, the noise of a sinister pursuit, then dull blows, groans, the sound of a fall. . . .

"Help! Murder!"

Another voice broke forth amid the rattle of shutters thrown open: Joséphin was calling through the drawing room window. Then, Julie, beside herself, unconscious of what she was doing, ran down the stairs, carrying her lamp. She entered the room at a bound; but she saw the blood, and drew back.

The old woman was still moving a little, her throat was cut. At that moment Joséphin appeared behind the maid, in his shirt, his thin legs showing. His face was distorted, and when he saw the corpse he began crying out again:

"Mamma! Help!"

Petit Louis, leaning against the window, stood looking at them, without attempting to escape, and unconsciously he wiped his hand, from which the blood was trickling down.

"Well," he was saying, "What's the matter with you?"

Dogs began to bark on the neighbouring farms. Men could be heard running up and calling to each other. Young Pelé was still bawling, though his voice was giving out, and Julie, losing her head, also began to yell: "Help! Help!" as though someone might appear to save her lover.

Adèle was in her kitchen, as she had been on the evening of the saint's arrival, when she heard the first shrieks. Étienne and Milot were sitting at the table, drinking.

"My God!" she cried out in alarm. "What's happening?"

It was impossible to recognise the voices, but she understood at once, in a flash of realisation. She dropped the plate she was wiping and collapsed on to a chair.

"There you are! There you are!" she stuttered. "Louis has been and done it!"

CHAPTER IX

"To do good, to do good . . . that is quite right and proper," grumbled M. François Dubourg, who had returned exasperated from Paris, "but after all it is none of my business to pay the debts of Providence."

With the tip of his walking stick he dislodged a pile of baby-linen that filled an arm-chair.

"This is not a home any more, it's a poor-house, a charity work-room."

He looked at his friend Jos.

"Not much fun, Barlincourt, eh?"

"Well . . ." Van den Kris was evasive, "if one likes this sort of thing. . . ."

"You show great devotion in still coming to see us."

The novelist considered for a moment, shaking his head :

"He is terrible," he continued. "He wants to reform everything: laws, religion, property, government, labour, education, even our way of making soup. . . . He would be capable of setting fire to the house to warm some wretched creature. I sometimes wonder how it will all end."

"But why don't you go back to Paris? You do not usually stay away so long."

M. Dubourg shrugged his shoulders.

"Go back to Paris? You are naïve, my friend. Since the murder the papers have left us comparatively in peace; let's hope it will last. . . . But he would not be back two days without causing a scandal on the Stock Exchange or presiding over a meeting on the steps of the Madeleine. I much prefer to bury myself here."

The fact was that the author of *Mademoiselle Flamberge*, always occupied with his newspapers—or so he pretended—buried himself as little as possible in the King's Domain. He was content to leave his family there, which caused Mme. Dubourg to say:

"Husbands adore the countryside, but it is the wives who stay there."

"You know me," continued M. Dubourg. "I am an easy going fellow, but my brother will end by making me loathe goodness. Since he settled the workmen, who have been expelled from the Cité, in my lodge, I have taken a violent dislike to the poor. Why should they suppose that something is owing to them because they are poor? It is idiotic. Is there any obligation for the poor to respect the rich?"

"You talk like a book," approved the Dutchman, standing with straddled legs, an old sailor's habit, so he declared, which had been acquired through the rolling of the ship. "In the first place, charity is useless, a regular swindle. To give here and there is just like trying to stop the onrush of tons of water into a ship by plugging the leak with paper. . . . Your brother may give a hundred, a thousand times more, he will not lessen the misery of mankind by a single tear. If Christ had been nothing more than a foolish philanthropist, His only thought would have been to succour the poor devils of Jews who surrounded Him. He would have spent all His time healing lepers, giving back sight to the blind, filling the empty baskets of the fishers and the wine-bottles of Cana, instead of presenting a new teaching to the world. His career on earth would have been fruitless, and History would have retained but a vague memory of a strange epoch when Judea was bursting with victuals and sweating from too much drink. . . ."

M. Dubourg made the classical gesture of Hippocrates refusing the presents of Artaxerxes.

"I implore you not to generalise," he interjected, "no philosophy, no ethics. . . . And, above all, do

not pronounce the name of God in my presence. I swear to you that my brother is turning me into an atheist."

Then, rising, he added :

"I admired him so much when he was in Africa. . . ."

Life in the King's Domain had become still sadder since the murder of Mme. Pelé. Adèle, who had been obliged to take to her bed for several days, was no longer able to do any housework, and it fell to the charwoman, who usually undertook the heavier tasks, to take charge of the kitchen; she sent up impossible stews and shrivelled joints, and caused Mme. Dubourg to lose her appetite altogether. Yvonne seemed restless and nervous, and burst into tears on the slightest provocation. Gérard had just gone back to Paris, whither his studies summoned him.

The villa seemed now to belong much more to the three households which had been evicted from the Cité and taken in by Saint Magloire, than to the Dubourg family.

The refugees began to complain the very day after they took up their quarters in the lodge, which Petit Louis had vacated. When Etienne forbade the urchins to romp about the lawn, the mothers grumbled that they were being treated "as if they had the plague." At every turn the men would say : "We shall complain to the saint."

Their noisy existence overflowed from their little house until it filled the whole place. Every evening, quarrels broke out in the ground-floor lodgings : the man, who was a drunkard, yelled threats at his wife and the frightened children squalled shrilly. In the next household, the husband, a kindly fellow, played the accordion to amuse his youngsters; and, for an hour after the neighbour's disagreements had subsided, the wheezy instrument could still be heard whining sentimental ballads. The head of the third family, a fanatic adherent of Magloire Dubourg, was

slightly mad : in the evenings, when he read the Gospels, he donned a sort of white tunic, which had been made by his wife, but in this garb he looked much more like a house-painter than a bishop.

The Evangelist was still receiving large gifts from all parts of Europe : money, clothes, parcels with food and medicine; and he had turned the drawing room into a kind of warehouse from which he drew according to his needs. He undertook tours which lasted several days, visiting the sick and bringing help to the aged.

Since he felt unable to do as much good by himself as he would have wished, he had begged his sister-in-law to accompany him, a woman being better able to render certain services than a man. Marie Louise, who was afraid of appearing unworthy to this man whose every act was an example, whose every word was a proof of goodness, gave her consent. An exhausting life now opened before her. Every morning, the saint awakened her at break of day. They hurriedly swallowed a meagre breakfast and set out laden with parcels. Mme. Dubourg, with her eyes still heavy with sleep, oppressed with a feeling of nausea, trotted at the side of the saint, whose strides were enormous. Barlincourt lay wrapped in silence, its streets wet and slippery. Marie Louise, her chin bitten by the cold, whipped by the October drizzle, gazed with envy at the happy villas which were still sleeping. The farms were waking up, light showing between their half-open shutters. In the sodden fields, old hay ricks, battered by the wind, still slept heavily, with blond and dirty strands tumbled across their brows.

More often than not, they went to Paris. The railway carriages still retained the musty smell of nights of travel. Mme. Dubourg was unable to endure the stench; huddled in a corner near the open window, her cheeks blue with cold, she breathed in the raw air which helped her to overcome her faintness.

In the crowded districts, the arrival of the saint

was soon reported. Women shouted the news, leaning out of the windows in their house-jackets; children hailed each other on the landings, and an avalanche of small clogs was heard rushing down the stairs.

Very much against his wish, the Evangelist was often followed by a band of strange disciples, who afforded much merriment to the onlookers. Notable among them were an old fortune-teller, who went into a trance the moment the miracle man opened his mouth; and a neo-Greek youth, in a tunic suitable for the "bal des Quat'-z 'Arts," whose sole doctrine consisted in living on raw salad and going barefoot. A witch proclaimed everywhere that Saint Magloire was a reincarnation of the prophet Daniel; and the sham Greek announced that he would help the saint to regenerate the world by teaching calisthenics, anti-alcoholism, and the weaving of linen in the home.

He was also followed by poor people, sick whom he had cured previously, beggars whom he had saved from hunger; and when the Evangelist went into the houses, crowds collected on the pavement outside them.

There floated through these working-class houses a smell of sinks and dogs' mess. The walls were sticky, the bannisters slippery. Brawling never stopped during the whole day, for the unfortunate lodgers hated each other and the noise of quarrelling voices resounded from the sixth floor down to the street, passing through the thin brick partitions and the resonant floors.

At that time, in the poor quarters, the first cases of an unknown illness were reported, a sort of influenza which carried off the victims in a few hours. Some said that it was the plague.

The saint devoted his visits primarily to those who were dying of this malady, and Marie Louise, afraid of inhaling the infection, held her breath.

The sight of these horrors inspired her with a profound disgust. Her candid and tender heart had

already changed : it was as though it had been tarnished. She became subject to fits of depression and sudden feelings of resentment. Her chief regret in the midst of all this squalor was that she had not made sufficient use of her opportunities of happiness.

There were moments when, terrorised by the prophecies of the saint, she told herself, in the room of some miserable working girl, that in her turn, at some time, she would be that malodorous rag; and she bent over the pauper's bed, as if she were looking into a mirror which reflected her own image. Those withered cheeks, those eyes with shrivelled lashes, those white gums swollen with rotting teeth : so might she look some day. . . . She would see no sky beyond the square of the garret window, and stoop day in, day out over her work; and her whole happiness would lie between a husband who beat her, and a wan baby, whose bottle she must fill with bread crumbs and sugared water, for want of milk.

The resignation of these death-beds, instead of making her reflect on the hazardous destiny of her immortal soul, filled her with a fierce desire to live.

"I want to enjoy what I have," she told herself with a kind of rage. "I want to be happy."

And her old calm happiness no longer seemed strong enough to satisfy her need.

By the end of a month there was already a great change in Marie Louise. The little dimples in her cheeks, where smiles had always seemed to be hidden, were no longer visible. She had grown thinner. M. Van den Kris noticed her new air of bitterness and determination.

"To be sure," the Dutchman said to her one day, "you will never be able to stand this existence, you will fall ill. It is a curious fact, but saints have always been the same. Read the Bollandists : they are full of edifying stories, about young men, touched by Divine Grace, who leave their old mothers dying of sorrow to go to Libya where they eat locusts ! And

such people are canonised ! You know that nobody admires your famous relative more than I do, but I ask myself whether the propagation of his ideas is worth all the disturbance it is causing. . . . A saint in modern society is a freak. . . . He is out of place, out of focus. . . . Look here, can you imagine a giant two hundred feet high, arriving one fine morning in Paris, and leaning up casually against the Towers of Notre Dame ? For a week, he would cause a sensation, but after a month, he would be in everybody's way : no one would know where to find a lodging for him ; people would criticise him for eating too much and have but one wish : to get rid of him at the earliest opportunity. . . ."

The perturbation in the midst of which Barlincourt was living seemed to prove that the pseudo-Dutchman was right. The Evangelist, though unintentionally, had plunged the small country-side into chaos. The workmen in the factory who had been made restless by his propaganda, suffered more than ever from the injustice of their lot ; it seemed to them that everything which belonged to others had been stolen from them ; but instead of waiting for future lives to redress in their favour the balance of the wrong done to them, they wanted to take their share without losing a moment's time. Though the syndicate had refrained from giving the order to strike, the output fell from day to day, and M. Aubernon wellnigh went out of his mind with worry. Mastering his wrath, so that the leaders should not gloat over him, he passed like a whirlwind from the fitting to the sewing rooms, from the making up to the mounting department, but he was never able to detect anything. Everyone was in his place, the fitter bent over his vice, the sailmaker was pinching the folds of his splice, but no one was working. The file of the fitter moved without griping, and the sail-maker never finished his ring. An overseer was needed to stand behind each workman.

The syndicate of sails and tarpaulins had come to

the conclusion that they ought to take advantage of this agitation to put forward certain claims. A delegation had come to demand that the staff should control the bonuses and that a forty-four hour week should be granted. M. Aubernon had exclaimed that "he would prefer to shut up shop," and since this interview the situation had grown worse than ever.

Mme. Aubernon did not hate the workmen any less than her husband. However, she urged on him the need for conciliation; and as she thought that Saint Magloire alone could restore peace, she moved Heaven and Earth to wrest from him a promise to come one evening to the château. Once there, they would argue with him and, with the help of statistics, show him the rights of the matter.

The single meeting which took place was enough to discourage the manufacturers. The whole company suffered from a feeling of constraint. The guests did not dare to talk. They stared curiously at the old man, who stood in a bent attitude at the window, with his clenched fists in the pockets of his coat.

Despite his wife's imperious looks, M. Aubernon was loath to begin the discussion.

"Come on, begin," she whispered urgently.

But he only coughed, opening his mouth as if to speak, but, in the end, remaining silent. Outside, somebody could be heard singing a revolutionary song.

It was Mathieu, who was bawling at the bar of the Factory Café. The workmen for some time past had been in the habit of making the old man drunk and getting him to sing inflammatory ditties under the windows of his "benefactor."

"A lazy dog, whom I support in idleness and who gets blind drunk three times a week," the manufacturer stormed, with flaming cheeks. "And they call me a profiteer!"

No one answered. The conversation languished.

Yvonne and M. Georges were half hidden behind the piano. For a moment the young man turned his

head away: he was white to the lips. Stooping over the young girl, he asked her in a toneless voice:

"Are you sure? Perhaps you are mistaken?"

Fortunately, no one paid any attention to them. All glances were focused on the saint. At last the manufacturer took courage:

"You probably know that things are very bad with my workmen?" he said brusquely to the old man. And then, off-hand, unable to find a better opening, he added:

"You should tell them to be reasonable, you would be doing me a favour. . . ."

The saint surveyed him attentively for a moment and replied:

"I have never preached anything to them but goodwill, perhaps they did not understand me. . . . But you yourself constantly hear it preached to you in church, yet are you sure that you are just?"

M. Aubernon tried to argue, but he lost all his will-power when he felt the hypnotic gaze of the saint resting on him. He was only able to stutter:

"Allow me . . . allow me. . . ."

His wife came to his rescue with praises for his beneficence; but the saint harshly reproached her with giving alms out of the proceeds of fines imposed on the workmen, and they took an icy leave of each other.

On that evening the return to their home was indeed gloomy. All the lights were out in Barlincourt. The rain dripped wearily into the puddles. Yvonne walked alone behind her parents; she saw nothing. All the details of the evening whirled in her head.

As the rain in a sudden squall began to fall more heavily she put aside her umbrella, exposing her chilled little back to the storm, and purposely stepped into a pool with her lightly-shod feet. She would have been glad to catch cold, to fall ill.

When they arrived at the villa, she kissed her parents and, swallowing her tears, went quickly up to her room.

She remained for a long while sitting on her bed, her arms drooping wearily at her side. Then, for the hundredth time perhaps, she stood before her mirror and scanned her figure, searching with anxious eyes at the level of her waist to find out whether already it could be seen. . . .

The workmen heard—no doubt through Milot—of the interview between the saint and their employer, and they concluded from it that the Evangelist was on their side. The excitement increased, meeting after meeting was held; and in the end, on a rowdy Saturday, a general strike was declared.

To stiffen the movement in Barlincourt the syndicate, not content with the saint, promptly summoned Comrade Lousteau, who was received by a delegation as he alighted from the Paris train.

The first glance of the Comrade as he left the station fell on a wall on which lines of bills were posted bearing "Long Live the Strike," in five-inch letters; and this at once put him in a good humour.

"Very good," he said to the militant group, "very good indeed!" They bridled with pleasure at the compliment, for Lousteau was a connoisseur. He had been dismissed from the Postal Service, was a former delegate of the C.G.T. and had twice been beaten at the legislative elections; he now belonged to the extreme Left of the party, and compared with him the most advanced syndicalists seemed lukewarm. His profession might have been summed up by the word "orator," for he was not known to possess any other occupation or resources.

If the miners of Anzin declared a strike, if the Union seamen of Marseilles left their ships, if the farmers of the Landes started an agitation, if at the arsenal of Brest or on the railways of Dijon the men showed signs of an ugly temper, Lousteau would be seen arriving with his painter's beard, his bald head, and negligently flowing black tie, that had become so

popular in working-class circles. He at once turned his attention to the most urgent business, which was to put the worst possible complexion upon everything.

He was like a general taking command of an army; he arrived with his plan of campaign ready formed: immediate cessation of work, meetings, communist soup-kitchens, compulsory control of the strikers' cards; in each section, picketing, forced stoppage of traffic by all means available, and the hunting out of "blacklegs." Then, if all this were not sufficient, he had recourse to processions on the public highway, and this secured his triumph: the dragoons usually arrived the very next day. Comrade Lousteau then took the first train back, for the place of a general is not with the outposts.

He was thus able to boast of great victories: he had stirred up to revolt peasants, metallurgists, dockers, vine-growers, shoemakers, and even soldiers who had been transferred from one garrison to another. His speeches roused crowds to fever-heat, for this man who displayed a rather limited intelligence when he was sitting down, blossomed out into a kind of genius as soon as he rose to his feet. He needed a platform, as the priestess, Pythia, needed her tripod. An inspired enthusiasm took possession of him and he shouted out anything that occurred to him, with his heart bursting and his head on fire.

Beating his breast, as though offering himself up to unjust judges and fratricidal bullets, he poured forth imprecations, prayers, complaints and defiance; and suddenly, as though through a rift in the storm, he found the words of a poet to talk of the future city: a cross between a Pastoral and a revolutionary pamphlet. Oh! what a wonderful future! . . . Machines wreathed in ivy by young girls, revolved of their own accord, and the red guards went away with white lilac stuck in the butts of their rifles. . . . But the avaricious "bourgeois" rises in front of them to forbid the outcasts entrance to the Elysian fields. See

them grinning, while before them passes the famished herd of mothers, striving in vain to press a drop from their dry breasts. . . .

Women sobbed and men clenched their fists.

These words falling on overwrought minds, quickly bore fruit. The people had been told that the hour was near—it was not clear what hour. The farmers had been told: "Divide the land among you!" the workmen: "Occupy the factories!" and all to such good purpose that excited old soldiers, embittered mothers and young lads, boiling over with ardour and self sacrifice, were led to acts of violence; so that a score or so of workmen were still in prison for the eloquence of Lousteau, and credulous recruits were dying, forgotten under the sun of Bel-Abbès.

Only a few old-fashioned syndicalists and suspicious anarchists looked askance at Lousteau; they had seen so many rabid revolutionaries, who had ended by entering the Government. All the others, however, unreservedly admired this speculative revolutionary.

All along the main street passers-by turned round to look at the small procession, and Comrade Lousteau who regarded this curiosity as a personal tribute was flattered. The citizens did not know the agitator by name, for the Socialist papers were the only ones which talked about him; but the enthusiasm of the strikers was more than enough to instil disquiet into their minds.

"If Lousteau takes a hand, look out for trouble!" said the Aubernon workmen, smiling confidently.

The orator was welcomed in the back premises of the shop where the strike Committee had taken up its quarters, for the Dumarchey girl had refused to lend her hall. He was at once put in possession of the facts.

He asked for divers information about the saint, whose ascendancy over the strikers was well known to him; and decided to make use of him. Mathieu was introduced to him as a matter of curiosity, an

honorary striker, since he no longer did any work; and the ex-soldier, glass in hand, described in a humorous fashion the beginnings of Aubernon.

"It might be useful to you in your speeches and it would make people laugh. . . . Just imagine, a man who has never given himself time to live properly. . . . A mercenary, nothing more. . . . A man without dignity. . . . And it isn't as if he had known how to behave. In all the time he worked with us, in the days when Krantz was boss, I never saw him pay for a round of drinks. Everything went into the Savings Bank, just like a house-servant."

That same evening, Lousteau actually made use of Mathieu in his speech. Pointing him out to the crowd of strikers, where he sat below the platform, he cried in a tone of contemptuous pity:

"Look at this miserable slave, this blind toy of an arrogant master. . . . Look at his wretched plight after forty years of servitude. That is all that the luckiest among you can look forward to: the situation of an old jester at the Court of your Potentate."

And Mathieu, with swimming eyes, reeking of brandy, nodded approval, greatly touched and proud of hearing himself talked about.

The covered market where the meeting took place seethed with a dense crowd. A vapour of stale breath, of sweat and smoke, floated round it. Men had climbed on to the roof, sitting astride the iron girders. Two powerful acetylene lamps illumined the platform with a harsh glare. The hall, in the shadow, was full of turmoil.

At each pause in Lousteau's speech, an ovation broke forth. With the clever intuition which distinguishes leaders of men, he had divined that he must speak to them chiefly of the saint, and that his name alone was capable of swaying them. Leaning over them, he seemed to scent their thoughts, to breathe in their appeal.

It was no longer Lousteau, it was no longer the

Syndicate, that presided over the meeting; it was Magloire Dubourg. It was no longer Barlincourt on strike which reared itself before the employer: it was the Saint. He invoked his name everywhere. "Give us this day our daily bread," became a Marxist formula and "Neither God, nor master," a text from the Gospel.

The audience, in a state of supreme exaltation, cheered without ceasing. Amid the stamping of feet, "Long live Saint Magloire" and "Long live the strike" merged into one. All were certain of victory, since they were assured that the saint was with them. The strong voice of Lousteau dominated the noise.

"The rotting society which feels its power giving way here, as it is giving way everywhere, may seek to grind us down by famine; it may call on its troops to threaten us with powder and shot: we shall continue to fight. Let them dare to accuse us of disturbing the public peace, they who mass their bayonets against us, while we only oppose them with the staff of the Good Shepherd!"

At last Lousteau sat down, exhausted. Prolonged applause forced him to come back and bow his thanks, like an artist. Then one part of the crowd began singing the "Internationale," while the people from the Cité, who were closely packed in the background, shouted a hymn.

Issue being thus joined, the strike rapidly spread to two small factories in the neighbourhood, and Barlincourt soon looked as though it were in a state of siege.

Mounted policemen rode about the streets. Every morning, when the workshops opened, there were scenes of brawling.

At midday, instead of the noisy procession of workmen on their way to dinner, the housewives could be seen going, soup-can or saucepan in hand, to the communist kitchens. But after a week's stoppage the strike funds gave out and the canteen had to shut down.

Resistance grew painful. Hollow-cheeked workmen could be seen returning mechanically to their closed factories, like dogs going back to an empty bowl.

Magloire Dubourg heard of their distress. He turned everything he could lay his hands on into money and came to the assistance of the famished strikers. It was all that was needed to destroy the last remaining shreds of his reputation in Barlincourt.

"He is a communist," the peasants said of him.

And that word "communist" sent a shiver through these families of poor people who possessed scarcely anything, as though Red bands were about to deprive them of the last they had, even to their imitation bronze clocks and the baby's shoes.

The strike continued, without serious affrays. The fanatical followers of Saint Magloire, who lived in the Cité, were the means of depriving the movement of any violence, for their inertia paralysed the others. They awaited the capitulation of their employer with confident resignation; they did not raise their voices at the meetings and refused to lie in wait for "black-legs" and to kick them homewards when they left the factory.

Lousteau, to rouse them from their apathy, held meeting after meeting: finally he organised a demonstration on the high road, a sort of procession without canopy or flowers, but accompanied by hymns and banners; and then the first skirmish took place. "We are entering upon the period of results," said Lousteau that evening with satisfaction. "If only there were fifty towns like this in France, bourgeois society would be at its last gasp."

From the first day, Barlincourt had taken sides: for and against. Milot, without hesitation, had chosen the group opposing his employer. He was for the strike, even before it had been voted, and on the day of Lousteau's arrival, he had made himself conspicuous by his enthusiasm, hailing the agitator with full-throated applause and wearing a red flower in his coat.

"If only that scoundrel hadn't a wooden leg!" fumed M. Aubernon.

Milot could not bear to remain a mere eye-witness of this upheaval, though he had no right to take part in a strike of tarpaulin and ropemakers, being after all only a porter and beadle. He therefore promptly organised a little meeting of his own: an assembly of ex-service men to protest against the African campaign.

This proved a disastrous evening for the Café Dumarchey. Milot, who had been drinking all the afternoon to set himself going, proposed the formation of a "War on War" group, open to all who demanded general disarmament and the brotherhood of nations; but a drayman, who had been mobilised as a motor-driver, having expressed a desire to move a resolution to the same effect, was shouted down by the cripple as a coward who skulked behind the lines, a ninny and a hermaphrodite, and was ordered to hold his tongue. As, however, he did not sit down quickly enough, Milot threw a bottle at his head. "That's the way we throw hand-grenades, you muck!"

The meeting ended in a hideous brawl, the ex-soldiers and the others belabouring each other mid cries of "Down with War!"

The workmen, next day, broke the windows of the workshops with stones and attacked an overseer, who was picked up with a fractured arm. The prefect was obliged to send for a detachment of infantry to guard the factory. The strike was now well under way, and Lousteau, pleased with this new success, was able to depart in peace: he took train for the Dauphiné, where the workers in the paper-mills were expecting him.

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Magloire Dubourg had stood aside altogether from the strike. His only part in it had been to relieve distress, and incidentally, on one occasion he had addressed some workmen who were harassing a

"blackleg." Syndicalists had grumbled then that he was, "letting them down."

When the Evangelist was not absent on a round of charitable visits, the converts of the Cité made a practice of paying their respects to him at the King's Domain, bringing in their wake unbelievers and atheists, who had never approached him before and who now came to see him because they had nothing better to do. They would find him smoking out a bee-hive or working in the kitchen-garden with a blue apron tied round his waist.

The day following the riot they came in greater numbers than usual, downhearted and fractious.

"Ah, if only we had the upper hand!" murmured a workman, a man of fifty, gaunt and leaden-faced.

"Well . . . what would you do?" asked the saint, who was pruning a shrub.

A gleam irradiated the eyes of the militant workman.

"What would we do? . . . Well . . . Every dog has his day. . . . Revenge! It would be they that would have to sweat and kill themselves with work, . . . they have lived long enough on our misery."

"And is that all?" replied the saint, returning the gardening shears to the pocket of his blue apron. "Is the society of which you dream any more just than the other? Tell me, will the world be better when you have replaced this society without virtue by a society without morals? Listen to me: What you need to do is to convince your opponents, not to triumph over them. . . . If the upheaval of the old world must be limited to a fight between the rich, who want to keep all and the oppressed, who want to take all, what does it matter to me which of two hatreds may gain the victory? I do not want to choose between the ferocity of full coffers and the cupidity of empty hands. . . ."

"All the same," argued the workman, "one can't look on and let them gorge themselves, without saying a word. . . . Are we all equal, yes or no?"

"More equal than you think, my man. Not equal in the short passage of one life, but equal in eternity. . . . Is the weakling the equal of the strong man, is the fool the equal of the intelligent man? No, is not that true? But their power does not last, and fate grants it but once. If they take an unfair advantage of it to enslave their brothers, they are guilty of folly and crime at the same time; because, having oppressed others, they will to-morrow be oppressed in their turn. The very interest of the rich man is to proclaim: "Neither rich nor poor," because soon he will himself be poor. Verily the benefactor benefits himself. As long as this truth has not entered the hearts of men, there will be on this earth none but slaves and executioners. . . ."

Each sermon brought him new converts, because in days of suffering men search always and everywhere for hope.

In the Cité an important group of fanatics, entirely devoted to the ideas of the Evangelist, had been formed. Such exaggerated virtue reigned in this sect that it had become the laughing-stock of the whole country-side. Their edifying mode of life had in fact something abnormal and scandalous about it. They seemed to live by a sort of inverted common sense, outside the pale of humanity. The little houses which were formerly alive with the noise of their joys and their quarrels, now lay silent and sad. Their inhabitants never committed a single bad deed, not the slightest peccadillo: it was as if they were no longer alive.

The strike had found them penniless, for they despised thrift and had faith in God. "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." But He Who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field seemed to have forgotten them and, but for Magloire Dubourg, they would have starved.

Devoid of pride, devoid of ambition, knowing well

that as the Gospel has it, they could not add one cubit to their stature, they lived in the state to which it had pleased Providence to call them and desired nothing more. Humbly, they enjoyed their mediocrity. Parents, whose sons were being educated in higher schools, had withdrawn them, thinking that they were sinning through pride in trying to change their station in life. They ate without greediness; the couples lived together in continence; and, to free their hearts from old lies that weighed heavily upon them, husbands and wives had made painful confessions to each other which would taint their whole lives with mutual suspicion and regrets.

Their very gentleness was exasperating. No matter what might be said to them, how they might be insulted or ill-treated, they accepted everything with resignation, and pitied those who offended them. That these violent men, these irritable women should have been transformed to such an extent in a few months, was perhaps the greatest miracle achieved by the saint, and certainly the most incontrovertible.

"They are not human beings any more, they are lambs, they are mussels," clamoured Milot, whose nerves were set on edge by this forbearance.

And when he was informed that these peculiar strikers refused to join in hunting out the traitors who still worked for the extortioner—as he called his employer—he grumbled indignantly:

"Never mind, at the great distribution of kicks somewhere, I know some people who can come with baskets. . . ."

It seemed that when this embryo society had been freed from its sheath of sins, its nerves had also been removed. Milot was right: these bodies without desires were no longer men.

The hostility against Saint Magloire was on the increase in Barlincourt. All those who were afraid of the strike accused the Evangelist of having set it on foot; some of the workmen, discouraged, began

to turn their backs on him. Shopkeepers and peasants whispered to each other all manner of abominable things. Allusions were made to the frequent absence of Mme. Dubourg and the Evangelist, and smiles exchanged when the novelist went to catch his train.

"He's more thick-headed than a prize-bull," old wags with clean shaven faces jested on the market place.

And the others answered philosophically :

"Pooh ! there are never more than two cuckolds in one household. . . ."

Young Moucron, puckering his obstinate forehead, described the death of his father in his own way.

"The saint came with his tomfooleries to his bedside when he was as bad as bad. I had to chuck him out. . . . It may be it's that performance which caused his death, poor old fellow. . . ."

When Magloire Dubourg travelled about the country-side, people did not greet him as they had done heretofore. Only the old women crossed themselves when he passed. Youthful labourers, hiding carefully, sometimes shouted "Yah, Yah !" from afar, to show the girls that they were not afraid. And directly he saw the saint the Trembler took to flight, fearing no one knew what.

Of all the sufferers who had been healed by the saint, only the blind man had returned to the King's Domain : and he had come to ask for money.

The Pelé case came before the Assizes in November. The bill against the girl Julie had been thrown out; Louis alone had to answer for the murder, without accomplices.

The trial had attracted a large public, for it became known that Saint Magloire would be called as a witness. People had even come from Paris. Immediately the doors were opened a band of strikers from Barlincourt invaded the places reserved for the public; and this preliminary scuffle showed at once

that there would be trouble before the day was over.

A livid light fell from the wide bay windows and gave a clear front view of the prisoner as he sat between two gendarmes. His hair had been cropped and the shameful tattoo-marks stood out against the pale brow. The jurors, scarcely visible in the gloom of the court, faced him.

The president, leaning heavily on the table, with his back bent, followed the trial in a half-slumber, his head bowed, so that the audience could only see the lower part of his face, bulging with fat. At his left, a weazel faced assessor wearing eyeglasses, looked alternately at the witnesses and the murderer with a fixed smile, in which sexual cruelty and stupidity were mingled. The other assessor appeared to be sketching something.

Behind the tribunal, above a plaster figure of the Republic, a bull's eye window cut out its sinister rim on the sky.

"A regular guillotine window," jested the Advocate-General.

The latter was a man of fine figure, who waved his drooping sleeves while he talked. He was eloquent, harsh, arrogant, and when he questioned a witness even for the defence, he never let himself go until he had extracted from him all that could incriminate Petit Louis.

"Thank you, M. le President, that was all I wished to know," he said, sitting down.

And, looking at the jurors, he shook his head significantly.

The murderer, hunched in the dock, with clenched fists and fixed gaze, never took his eyes off from this red-faced man who was bent on destroying him.

At moments, his rage carried him away: he suddenly sprang to his feet, and leaning forward, with a malignant look on his face, and his arms held stiffly out, he began to shout; he gave the lie to the witness,

held his ground before the Prosecutor, thrust aside his counsel, as though he were writhing to escape from the tentacles which were closing in upon him.

"Come, that will do, keep quiet," stormed the President, hammering on his desk like a disturbed school usher. "You will speak when you are questioned."

"All the same," choked Petit Louis in a spent voice, "they are not going to cut my throat without allowing me to defend myself!"

"That is your counsel's business."

The latter thereupon, visibly touched, half rose to his feet and gratefully inclined his head. He also bowed to the Attorney-General after the latter had roughly handled him, he bowed to the witnesses, he bowed to the jurors: with a little encouragement he would have bowed to the gendarmes. This was his first appearance at the Assizes and he was counting on this notorious case to launch him. Every time he stood up, nervously fingering his notes, to answer the prosecution, his agitation almost suffocated him; and several times he was obliged to stop short, lost in his headings, his proofs and deductions, forgetting where he had begun and not knowing how to finish. Behind him, with his chin sunk on his arm, looking out of the corners of his eyes, the accused listened, without understanding. He gave the impression of a sheep delivered to the mercy of a clumsy butcher.

The witnesses passed one after another, frightened, flurried by questions, their wits bemused, thinking only of getting away. Joséphin burst into sobs in the witness-box and the President charitably cut short his evidence, of which nothing could be heard but scraps which were hiccupped out amid sobs.

"His tears are enough for me," declared the Attorney-General, with a flutter of his red sleeves.

Louis's first employer, a man who had thrashed and ill-treated him, came forward with an account of the vicious life he had led as a youth. There was such malevolence in his asthmatic voice, such ran-

cour in the gossip which he repeated that the public murmured disapproval. The old man, however, was not disconcerted.

"Yes," he insisted, turning toward Louis, "I have always said you would end on the scaffold."

The audience was roused. In the hubbub no one heard the insult which the murderer hurled at him; but, while the President wakened from his slumbers, demanded silence, the Advocate-General proclaimed in his theatrical voice :

"You were right, sir : his fate is inscribed on his forehead."

Petit Louis bore this long ordeal without flinching : he appeared to doze while the doctor gave evidence for the prosecution, and when the Trembler, the first witness for the defence, was ushered in, he only gave him a little look of welcome, which the other did not see.

Sometimes he turned his head toward the public, his eyes resting on all these different countenances : for months past he had only seen the same faces of judges and warders. At other times he listened to the noises coming from the street, the rolling of carriages, the cries of hawkers. Free. . . .

Evening was drawing near. Clinging to the high window-pane, the day peeped in, as if loath to depart without knowing.

When Adèle was called and came forward trembling, her features working, the accused gazed at her with a sort of despair. She was dressed completely in black and he thought, with a sudden chill at his heart, that she was already wearing mourning for him.

Turning his head away, so as not to be seen, he began quietly to weep, without moving a muscle.

"Look," murmured some of the spectators. . . .
"He does not even want to look at her. They are heartless, these monsters. . . ."

The servant's tale proved to be a pitiful one. She recounted as well as she could the life of her sister,

who had died from destitution and had been obliged to hand over her baby to the Assistance Publique, as she was unable to feed him. She hemmed napkins, at threepence a dozen, and provided the thread.

This detail provoked a titter from a woman in the audience.

The father, a drunkard, had disappeared. And the deserted boy had grown up in the country first with the metal-beater, after that anywhere. . . .

"I respect your grief, Madam," the President, who had now recovered from his lunch, intervened emphatically. "But it is an honour for France that the children brought up under our Assistance Publique with the admirable devotion of which everyone is cognizant, provide the country with a contingent of honest workers, and, when necessary, heroic soldiers."

It so happened that, by a disconcerting coincidence, two wards of the Institution sat on the same bench: the murderer and a gendarme. They looked at each other; then, simultaneously, turned their eyes away.

Julie was the next witness. When she entered, a few jeers sounded behind her and the miserable girl stopped short, bewildered. She was livid, white-lipped, and seemed still paler under the black kerchief which she had tied over her head, to hide her cropped hair. She at once bent her gaze on her lover, stirred by a mysterious emotion: she had always thought that she would see him thus, some day, before judges, between two gendarmes. It was like a dream coming true.

The President was losing patience.

"Turn round," he exclaimed. "It is the jury you must address."

She did not repeat a single word of what Petit Louis had told her in her garret the night of the crime, understanding that it could harm him, and only recounted what she had seen in the disordered room, the bleeding corpse, the petrified murderer.

"She still moved a bit, and I cried, Help!"

The public, shocked, again began to murmur.

"I wonder whether the proper place for this girl is really the witness-box," exclaimed the Advocate-General when Julie withdrew.

After she had gone, the President seemed to hesitate and conversed in a low voice with his Assessors, their three red gowns touching each other.

Petit Louis, who was gazing vaguely at the door through which Julie had gone, leaned over to his counsel.

"And Mlle. Dubourg," he inquired timidly, "will she not come?"

"Why, no, we do not need her evidence," answered the lawyer.

"Ah!" . . .

Louis sat down, without saying anything more. He stared before him.

The President at this moment came to a decision.

"Call M. Magloire Dubourg," he ordered.

A shiver ran through the spectators and there arose a sudden noise of impatient voices, shuffling feet, and benches being pushed back. All eyes converged on the witnesses' room. At the back of the hall, behind the railing, people jostled against each other. Then the door opened and complete silence reigned.

He was the one person for whom they had been waiting, all eyes were instantly fastened on him.

He was wearing a wide mantle in place of the legendary cape in which he was usually seen; bare-headed, his white hair like a halo, he slowly advanced to the bar, and having caught sight of Louis, he gazed at him for a long while in silence.

The President, bent on hurrying the case through, mumbled the formula for the oath:

"Say: I swear it."

Magloire Dubourg then turned his eyes on him.

"Swear on what?" he asked quietly.

The judge made a gesture of ill-temper.

"The crucifix has been withdrawn from the law courts," he said, forestalling the objection, "and the

oaths which are sworn here are not less solemn on that account. The testimony of atheists is just as valuable as that of others."

"No," the saint replied forcibly. "If Christ reigned in all hearts, you would be able to destroy your tribunals and your prisons; you would not be here in red gowns, these loafers would not come here to scent blood, and there could not be, between two gendarmes, a twenty-year-old assassin."

The President tried to drown his voice:

"I beg of you. . . . All this has no connection with the process of the law. You must keep strictly within the limits of your evidence."

The public, whose attention had been caught at once, listened breathlessly. Women, with white faces, had risen to their feet. In the background somebody shouted: "Long live Saint Magloire," and the disturbance began. People wrangled with each other.

"Sit down," protested the spectators on the back benches. "Sit down!"

The usher, whom nobody heard, clamoured "Silence." And the President, standing up, gesticulated wildly. The voice of the saint dominated the noise.

"Verily, I hear the rending of your old world which is about to collapse. . . ."

"Silence," commanded the President. . . . "Intervention like this is as ridiculous as it is misplaced; I insist on your observing the respect due to the law. . . ."

The saint continued in the midst of the tumult: "You only judge in the name of egoism and of fear. . . . You are the watch-dogs of a house that is condemned to ruin. . . ."

"Enough!" stormed the President, banging on the table with his fists. . . . "I shall have you arrested at the bar. . . . Gendarmes! . . ."

"Judge not that ye be not judged, said the Master," the voice of thunder continued, "for with the same

measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again."

Loud cries rent the air. The railings in the background were shaken by the pushing of the crowd. Some nervous jurors stood up. Suddenly a yellow flash, followed by a deafening explosion, blinded everyone. Frightened women shrieked and rushed towards the exit. It was only a photographer who had taken a flashlight picture. At last two gendarmes cut through the assembly and approached the saint. The cries redoubled.

In the enclosure at the back, people were shouting "Long live Saint Magloire!" at the top of their voices. Petit Louis, livid, surveyed this scene of madness. No one paid any attention to him.

When he felt the hand of the gendarmes roughly laid on his shoulder, Magloire Dubourg simply turned his head and looked at them. His eyes had the strange gleam which sometimes shone in their depths, and the two men felt a sort of shock on meeting his glance. He scanned these men, one after the other, very calm in the midst of the uproar.

"Gendarmes, take away the prisoner. . . . No, the witness," stuttered the President.

The gendarmes tried to obey the order, but their strength seemed suddenly to ooze from them, leaving them with limp fingers and nerveless wrists. They were like children wanting to move a stone statue.

"Long live Saint Magloire!"

"Down with the 'cops!'"

Some workmen scrambling over the railings sprang forward to release the Evangelist; but soldiers called in from outside threw themselves in front of them and pushed them back, amid a racket of overturned benches and a storm of cheers and hisses.

Shrill cries of women assailed the ears. Scuffling and fighting had begun. An unkempt man carried along by two soldiers was yelling. Excited journalists standing on their seats were taking notes.

"And you," the saint flung at the Prosecutor, "you will be proud to-night, to bear off his head. It will represent a new triumph. . . . Verily, I tell you, you will bear it all your life, the burden of this boy's head, and every day it will grow heavier. . . ."

The young lawyer with arms outstretched, begged for quiet, but Magloire Dubourg did not see him. He cried to the jurors, who were leaving the court :

"Hearts of stone ! There will be no pity for those who have shown themselves pitiless. . . . The hangman also will be judged. . . ."

Crowded together near the exit, the members of the jury faced his anger, but from a distance. A small sour-faced official threw at him :

"You side with the murderer?"

"No. He will pay for his crime on earth, but the blood which will flow will only cleanse his soul and sully yours. . . . Aceldama. Aceldama."¹

The hall was being cleared amidst a deafening noise. Outside, passions ran high. The demonstrators, yelling, strove to release those who were in the hands of the police and soldiers. When the saint appeared on the steps, he was greeted by a long ovation; then, while a tumultuous procession was forming behind him, others, returning to the attack, tried to overrun the court by breaking in the doors. At last, after an hour, peace was restored and, the President having received orders from Paris, the hearing was resumed before a room that was two-thirds empty.

"My dear friend, I do believe that your client is lost," said the Advocate-General to the counsel for the defence. "My speech to the Court is perhaps unnecessary."

"Still," the young man objected anxiously, "there is the family history, the mental examination. . . . You yourself said this morning . . ."

"Yes, this morning you were certain to get off with

¹ Aceldama: field of blood. The field which Judas bought for his thirty pieces of silver.

penal servitude for life; but now, you understand the jurors will be thirsting for revenge, and as they cannot condemn the saint, they will make your client pay for it."

"At least," sighed the newly fledged lawyer, "it cannot do me any harm. . . ."

"Not at all, on the contrary. And now that all is lost, do not hesitate. Go at it for all you're worth. . . ."

"Have you already obtained many death-sentences?"

"This will make the eighth," the Prosecutor answered negligently. And he added, throwing back his sleeve:

"My wife will be so pleased. . . ."

It was nearly eight o'clock when the jury finished its deliberations. The hall was dark. The little official had to come close to a chandelier to read the verdict. In the square, shouting was still going on.

"On my honour and my conscience, before God and men, the answer to the jury is "Yes" to all the questions. . . ."

Adèle, huddled on the last bench, chilled with horror, a mist before her eyes, listened to the drone of unintelligible words.

"What does it mean? What is it?" she asked with chattering teeth.

Her neighbour looked at her.

"A sentence of death."

CHAPTER X

BARLINCOURT shivered with cold. A sharp wind roamed through the deserted streets, the empty timber-yards and the bare fields. The high chimney-stacks of the factories towered lifeless, and the regular throb of the machines was no longer heard. The foremen wandered about the silent workshops. The vices remained motionless, with drooping arms; tools lay about on the benches; in the repair shops, unfolded rolls of canvas were still on the trestles with the big needle sticking half way down the seam. The tarpaulins of the sheds flapped in the wind and the noise resounded sadly through the emptiness of the factory.

M. Aubernon had just decided that the strikers domiciled in the Cité must leave their dwellings on the following Saturday, failing which they were to be evicted. This crowning manœuvre to break up the strike had acted on the workmen like the lash of a whip. The women, ever ready to weep, were bemoaning their lot, but the men talked of raising barricades.

As to the fanatics—there were at least fifty families of them—they submitted at once and were tying up bundles of clothing without making any demur. This drove the others to fury. Quarrels broke out. Men who wanted to fight were heard vociferating :

“Go and lick the boots of the boss, you traitor !”

The militant members of the community, soured by failures, realised that the game was up and laid the blame on the saint.

“It is his fault ! Why did he speak of Aubernon at the Assizes? It had nothing to do with it. . . . That is why they are turning us out. . . . If those

chicken-livered innocents had not stuck up for the saint, this would not have happened :”

“Will your saint find a lodging for my kid? Or the Curé? He was hand in glove with the boss, your Magloire, you blacklegs !”

However, a goodly number of strikers still upheld the saint. On the evening of the trial, when he returned to Barlincourt, they escorted him with cheers from the station, and on the way back they stopped under M. Aubernon’s windows to shout “Murderer !”

Among those taking part in the demonstration, M. Aubernon, crimson in the face and stamping his feet with rage, recognised Milot, and this proved the last straw. The same night, without a word of explanation, he discharged the doorkeeper-sacristan.

The cripple would not allow himself to be demoralised by such a trifle. On the contrary: he was proud of being promoted to the ranks of the working-class martyrs and was quite sufficiently rewarded when at the first meeting, he was unanimously elected chairman. That evening the renegades, who were moving out without putting up any resistance, had been freely hooted and it was decided to make a stand, even against a display of military force.

Saint Magloire, to whom his disciples had come for advice, told them to remain in the Cité.

“Afterwards, if they expel you,” he promised them, “you will take up your abode in the church. The House of God is the house of the poor, it is yours.”

The Curé, when these words were repeated to him, was nearly overwhelmed. He saw his chapel invaded, his vestry defiled, the presbytery plundered; and he went straight to the Town Hall to ask M. Quatrepomme to have the church guarded on the day of the evictions.

Since sentence had been passed on Petit Louis, Abbé Choisy had read in the *Croix* and the *Nouvelliste*, which were lent to him, such articles on the Evangelist that the old man no longer awed him. He

had even had the audacity to call him curtly "Sir" in public.

After he had placed his request before the Mayor, the Curé betook himself to the Gendarmerie and lodged a complaint against Milot. The latter, filled with sudden zeal since his dismissal, was determined to remain at his post of beadle in spite of all opposition; and that very morning he had insisted on serving Mass and had caused a scandal during the service.

Thus, in the streets in the Cité, in the public houses, and even in the church, people were quarrelling. Often the wranglers came to blows.

Disquieting rumours were rife in Barlincourt; it was said that the workmen in the Cité were entrenching themselves and that the factory was going to be blown up. The terrified tradesmen only half-opened their shops and the dragoons clattering along imparted to the empty streets an atmosphere of apprehension.

On the Saturday, everything remained closed. A thousand onlookers were massed on the Flanders road hoping to see something; but a troop of cavalry impeded their passage, and prevented them from getting through. People were tremulously expecting affrays, and some of the idle spectators were already looking out for a way of escape. When the Commissary arrived, there was an explosion of cries and hisses, but only a few gendarmes were needed to push back the demonstrators.

From afar there could be heard the heart-rending cries of women in the Cité: they were evidently holding on to their homes with might and main. The children, seized with terror, were screaming shrilly. Door-locks were being forced, barricades destroyed, and bundles of clothes thrown into the mud.

Between the hind-quarters of the horses the scared groups of refugees could be seen, looking at their houses with despairing eyes. On the brick walls were

lines of string, along which nasturtiums used to climb in the summer.

"Haven't we got a home any more, then, Mummy? . . ." whined the smaller children.

Shabby luggage was being piled up: black wooden trunks, baskets, folding beds, a cradle. . . . It was all loaded on lorries from the factory, and taken into an old tile-shed, open to all the winds of heaven, which the Prefect had placed at the disposal of the homeless.

The evicted people still forlornly waited. Little by little the gendarmes drove them back. It was the end. . . . A sort of procession formed, women with their white-faced babies in their arms, people cumbered with all sorts of heterogeneous articles, which they had not wanted to leave behind: clocks, almanacs, a fat red eiderdown quilt. They filed by, shamefaced, between two rows of curious spectators. A platoon of gendarmes came behind, urging the flock forward; they looked like a gang of convicts on their way to transportation. Out of bravado, they talked loudly, chaffing each other and forcing themselves to laugh. But when they reached the outskirts of the town and found themselves alone, silence fell suddenly upon them. The rain, cutting and icy, had begun to fall, and without a word, they moved wearily away. . . .

Barlincourt drew a long breath of relief; everything had gone off peacefully. . . . The shopkeepers, reassured, took down their shutters. In the Rue de Verdun the well-to-do distributed cigarettes among the soldiers.

One man remained indignant: and that man was Milot. In anticipation of serious trouble and of the occupation of the church by the Christian proletariat, he had donned a black coat with a chain round his neck. In this attire, supplemented by his staff of office, he had, during the whole afternoon awaited demonstrators in the square before the church. Nobody appeared.

He had seen the cavalry go past again, then the loafers, walking two abreast, protected by umbrellas; but after that he could no longer contain himself. He apostrophised the passers-by, played havoc with the children, bawling at the top of his voice, while he brandished his staff aloft. He shouted that the strikers were "knuckling under," that there were no men left, and that the end of the Republic was at hand. He pretended to tear off his medals and throw them into the mud, then, his eloquence exhausted, he cried out "Long live Saint Magloire," feeling sure that these words would annoy everybody.

And now, with his voice, hoarse and spent, he remained stubbornly, all by himself in front of the church door, still bawling, so that he seemed to be holding a solitary parade for the benefit of two children who, blue from cold and the damp wind, were watching him.

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"Even the chickens are taking a hand," grumbled old Étienne, who was now the only gardener at the Villa Dubourg.

Though he did his best, preparing warm messes for them and cleaning the fowl houses with coaltar to rid them of the vermin with which they were infested, one of them died every day. He was beginning to suspect the refugees, who now had the free run of the gardens, for the saint protected them against everybody.

If he had not been buoyed up by the hope that the family would soon return to Paris, or go south, leaving him in sole occupation of the house at Barlin-court, Étienne would have left the place long ago, for his position had become unbearable.

He took his meals alone in the kitchen with Adèle, and completely lost his appetite through being faced day after day by the haggard-eyed woman. The cook no longer complained, and no longer wept; the bad dreams of her sleepless nights still seemed to haunt her waking hours.

He had imagined at first that she would hate the saint, for all the papers had said that but for him the murderer would probably have got off with penal servitude. But, on the contrary, the first time she saw him again, she kissed his hands, weeping. Old Étienne really could not understand anything of all these goings on, and, as he was terribly bored, he had taken to drink.

From time to time some one could be heard shouting outside: it was the fanatic of the lodge coming home, escorted by a troop of urchins singing:

"He is cracked,
Pan, pan, pan, pan,
There is nothing in his head. . . ."

Bégin, the baker, had refused to supply the King's Domain any longer, saying that all the misfortunes of the district came from there; and as soon as his last account had been settled, he had shouted insults through the railings, his fat face purple with rage. When the gardener wanted to go out and thrash him, the saint held him back.

"Leave him alone," he said gently. "Perhaps he is right; and I have still a great deal of pride to overcome, if I am capable of being hurt by abuse."

Encouraged by this attitude, the baker persevered: since then he stopped his cart every morning in front of the villa, and standing up on his box, he made a little speech, crying shame upon the demagogues, the poisoners of the nation, whilst the fanatic in his white robe, standing at his window, shouted "*Vade retro*" and cursed him with outstretched arms.

The other refugee laughed himself sick and invited friends to come and see the performance.

"I swear to you, it's more fun than the cinema."

Among the strikers the brawls had become so violent, the "reds" against the converts of the tile-sheds, that the latter had to be moved and lodged in another hovel.

M. François Dubourg, exasperated by all these incidents, had given up returning to Barlincourt. "The Red Bastard" was coming on again at the Ambigu Theatre, and he declared that the rehearsals were keeping him in Paris.

The truth was that he had taken a mistress—his first serious love-affair, though he was over fifty—and he preferred to live with her in bohemian fashion at Montmartre, rather than return to the King's Domain, where the austere atmosphere was too much for him.

Mme. Dubourg also was frequently away from home. One day, when she felt more overwrought than usual, she had fainted in the stairway of a house to which she was accompanying the saint, and she had felt so disheartened, so weary of everything, that instead of returning straight to Barlincourt, she went up to M. Van den Kris' flat to rest for a moment. She confessed to him her disgust with this joyless existence, these monotonous days. Jos showed his affection for her, and endeavoured to comfort her with clumsy caresses; and after that she often went back to see him.

It was only when she was with him that she escaped from the tediousness which enshrouded her. It was a relaxation to listen smilingly to the Dutchman's whimsical remarks, and not to be continually exhorted to good works. Moreover, she was experiencing that tardy thirst for happiness which the saint had awakened in her.

She was also pleased by the flat itself. The rooms were queerly furnished, with exotic "bric-à-brac" that made them look like the clearing house of a seaport, and they smelled of vanilla, leather, old books and sandal wood. Strange curtains, made of many-coloured strips, such as are probably used in the huts of negro chiefs, hung in front of the windows, and the daylight could hardly creep in through them. On the walls hung panoplies of arrows and assegais, Sudanese citharas; zebu horns; upon the furniture

stood palm-fibre baskets, filled with dried fruits and shells, a large compass and guide books of shipping companies.

M. Van den Kris slept on a camp-bed of green linen, with its mosquito-net set up ready for use. To light his room, he used a hurricane-lamp, which stood on two cabin trunks that were always ready packed. There was every encouragement to perpetual travel: the posters, with large red steamers—DEUTSCHE OST AFRIKA LINIE—which papered the entrance-hall; a rolled-up tent, the maps pinned to the walls, above all, the penetrating smell of the wilds, which these things had preserved. Mme. Dubourg, amused, tried with the tips of her fingers the points of the lances and the edge of the Touareg swords, with their short blades and their cross-shaped hilts.

It was here that M. Van den Kris had been travelling for the last twenty years. . . . Lying on this sofa, he exhausted in the dreams of a single evening every peril, every joy of a whole year's wandering. It was enough for him to read the name of a port on the prospectus of a steamship line to be carried to the other end of the world. In this motionless cabin he had tasted the coarse delights of drinking bouts at Colombo, the long reveries on the decks of sleeping ships, when the flying fish of the China Seas dash by like silver darts in the blue air. He had known landings at Grand Lahou, where the Kroumen paddlers, singing, clear the high foam-fringed bar; he had crossed Laos with its forests of tamarinds, the desert uplands of the Andes, the burnt brushwood where the vultures fly, Fiji with its perfume of vanilla. And all because he had found a faded view of Samoa and the portrait of a little black queen with hibiscus-crowned hair, marking a page in a book, he had, while poring over a map of the blue seas dotted with fascinating names, completed in a single night that cruise among the indolent islands of the Pacific, of which he still talked sometimes.

Marie Louise, on the occasion of her first visit, had been frightened in the semi-darkness of the flat by a greyish carapace.

"Oh! This hideous beast! Is it a crocodile?" . . .

"No, it is an iguana, a species of lizard. They climb up trees like squirrels. I brought it back from over there as a souvenir. . . ."

"Over there" was Bordeaux, where he had bought it for fifteen francs in the shop of a bird-seller.

He and she no longer felt the impulse which throws eager lovers into each other's arms at their first rendezvous; he was close upon fifty and she just over forty. Their love had deeper roots than that.

They recalled old memories: the ashes were not yet cold. . . . He recalled his first visits to Barlincourt, Gérard gambolling in short knickerbockers, Yvonne trotting about in knitted socks. . . .

At the close of day, pulling aside the curtains, they would stand shoulder to shoulder and watch the small square where the children were playing. It was Saint Martin's summer. A transparent sun was fading on the roofs and, misled by these few days of warmth and light, trees were putting forth green buds and birds were singing.

"They deceive themselves as we do," murmured Marie Louise, smiling mournfully. "They, too, believe that spring has come back. . . ."

With her father and mother always away, her brother back in Paris for his classes, Yvonne remained alone for days together in the silent villa.

With a book or some embroidery on her lap, she would sit for hours without stirring, almost without thinking. She was like a fly, paralysed by the spider who is watching it. She awaited her destiny, unable to do anything. . . . The letters which she had written to Georges Aubernon had remained unanswered; often she had waited for him at the station,

but he no longer came to Barlincourt. And now she had been pregnant for at least three months.

Several times, feeling her heart too fragile for so much sorrow, she was on the verge of confessing everything to her parents, but the respect tinged with awe which she felt for her uncle kept her back. If he had not been there, she would already have thrown herself into her mother's arms and, weeping, would have yielded up her poor secret; but in his presence she would never dare. Rather than reveal her shame to him, rather than appear impure before his clear eyes, she would have preferred to die.

To die. . . . The word no longer instilled fear into her heart : the saint spoke of death with so much tenderness. . . . A short sleep, and on the other side, a new life, without a stain. . . . She gazed at the beautiful white clouds spinning past in the icy sky. Perhaps it is with those big sponges of light that the blemishes on dead people's souls are wiped out. . . .

Benumbed, cast back entirely into herself, she invented sad little romances. . . . She saw herself, quite white, in her bed, dying of consumption. A pretty silk shawl had been thrown over her shoulders and her mother was weeping. . . .

Or else she sat down at the piano, picking out some plaintive melody, and it seemed to her as though the pale shadows of Schumann and Chopin were leaning over her and saying :

"Come . . . Come. . . ."

Only during dinner, when her uncle was present, Yvonne relaxed somewhat. An impression of her childhood came back to her, when, after playing hard, she had entered the church and found herself suddenly alone, so slender on her prie-dieu, in the midst of that large, still, empty space which smelt of incense. She now felt the same in her ecstasy. An atmosphere of serenity surrounded the saint.

When she went up to her room, she could hear her

uncle walking backwards and forwards overhead. She followed his heavy step, from his ever-open window to his oaken prie-dieu. She heard him drop on his knees.

In the sleeping house, she soon caught the sound of a hushed voice. But it was not the murmur of a prayer; it was rather as if the saint had been answering someone, before his crucifix of black wood.

Then, frozen, her heart in her mouth, whispering timidly Ave Marias, the girl listened to that murmur which perhaps was speaking to God.

One morning when she was alone, Yvonne felt suddenly ill. A feeling of nausea assailed her, her legs gave way. She looked at herself in the mirror; her nose was pinched, her eyes hollow, and she remembered a little maid who had been dismissed some time ago, because of that same appearance. At the time she had not understood, but now, she knew, and the memory made her burst into tears.

When the weeping fit was over, she suddenly felt lucid and resolute. It was imperative that she should see Georges, speak to his parents, tell them everything. When they knew the truth, they would be compelled to consent to the marriage; their disagreement with the saint would not be allowed to stand in its way.

Her girlish hesitations had all of a sudden given place to womanly determination, and she even wondered how she could have been so unhappy, when it was so simple to arrange everything. As she knew that Mme. Aubernon, terrified by the strikes, had returned to Paris some days before, she at once took the train, a thing she had never previously done by herself.

Directly Mme. Aubernon saw the girl enter the room, she understood. Nothing had ever led her to anticipate such a scandal, and yet, at the first glance, some kind of divination enlightened her.

She recoiled involuntarily, with a surly pinching

to her lips and found herself on the point of crying out: "It is not true!" But she recovered her self-possession at once and, forcing a smile, welcomed Yvonne as graciously as she could.

"What a pleasant surprise! Are you spending the day in Paris? And how is your mother?"

The short phrases kept whirling round like a flight of birds in the blank mind of the poor little girl. She felt giddy and, even before she opened her lips, she could tell that her voice would fail. Yet she did not think of going away.

Mme. Aubernon left the room to give an order and the young girl understood that Georges was at home and had been told not to appear.

Her hands were so icy that when she laid them on the marble of the centre table she did not feel the cold of the stone. She was not agitated, but she realised that she was going to live through a moment as solemn as death itself. When Mme. Aubernon returned, Yvonne thought that she looked harsher than before. Nevertheless she did not flinch.

"Well, my little Yvonne," questioned the mother in her cutting voice, "Have you got a message for me?"

The girl did not dare look at her, not from fear, but rather from shame and decency.

"Madame Aubernon, you know that I cared very much for Georges. . . ."

Mme. Aubernon, at once on the defensive, interrupted her:

"He is not here."

Yvonne shook her head as if to say that this was not what she wanted. She spoke in a muffled voice, without lifting her eyelids. Having stopped an instant to choose her words she continued:

"Georges and I saw each other freely; you and my parents were agreed about that, and I always thought that later on we should marry."

"Oh, not at all," protested Mme. Aubernon. "There has never been anything definite. . . . It

was a mere childish friendship, which carried no obligations with it, and my son is not in the least bound."

"But he is, Madame," said Yvonne simply.

Mme. Aubernon ceased playing with her chain of black stones, her heart heavy with apprehension.

"I do not understand what you mean. . . . Have your parents advised you to take this step? I am not surprised. Well, then, what is your object?"

Yvonne summoned her courage and in a little hurt voice :

"I have come to ask Georges to marry me as he promised," she murmured.

This time, the mother rose, with a malicious expression on her face :

"Ah, no, no," she ejaculated, still restraining her anger; "we won't allow ourselves to be caught like that. . . . My son cannot marry you, you know it. First, there was never any question of it. And after what has happened in Barlincourt, we no longer have anything in common with your family; you are our enemies. It is on account of your uncle that all our factories have gone on strike; he has insulted my husband, he has roused the country to revolution. . . . Oh ! I will never see your parents again, never, you can tell them that from me, since it is on their advice that you have come to seek us out. . . ."

Yvonne remained unmoved. Her inherent sweetness was more firm and resolute than sheer will-power. Nothing could stop her.

"Madame, my parents do not even know that I am here," she asserted. "I could not possibly tell them."

Mme. Aubernon sneered evilly :

"Really, for a girl in good society, you have been nicely brought up. . . . Well, if your parents do not know you are here, you need not have taken the trouble. . . ."

"I had to, Madame," said the young girl, whose delicate hands had begun to shake. "Ask Georges, he will tell you. . . ."

"I do not believe you," shrilled the woman, at last losing her temper. "My son does not know anything, he would not understand any of your tricks."

"Yes," went on Yvonne, who felt a nervous trembling taking possession of her whole body, from her knees which knocked against each other, to her quivering chin and the very words in her contracted throat. "Yes, he knows. . . ."

And shaken by a big gasp of distress, she burst into tears, her face hidden between her hands.

This outburst should have enlightened Mme Auberon, but she was determined to understand nothing, to remain blind. She gazed with hatred at the weeping child; she would gladly have seized her bodily and thrown her out to the landing, as she might have done in bygone days, when she still belonged to the working class. It was her son that she was shielding, and she was ready to do anything to save him from this danger. Already she was standing in front of the door of the drawing room to stop the child in case she should wish to pass.

Without ceasing to cry, Yvonne moaned :

"Georges must marry me; he cannot do otherwise now, he knows that quite well. . . ."

It seemed to Mme. Auberon that the floor creaked in the next room and she had only ears for that. She looked round furtively, ready to push back the door, should her son by chance wish to come in.

"I have told him," confessed Yvonne at last, exhausted with weeping, "it is awful, I am going to have a baby. . . ."

She lay across the table, her face on the marble top, her arms hanging at her sides, and nothing could be seen of her but a slender back shaken with sobs.

Mme. Auberon drew near, white with passion.

"It is not his, it is not his," she stammered. "You are trying to blackmail us."

The young girl raised herself, showing her haggard face.

"You say that! . . . to me!"

She was frightful to look upon with her mottled skin, her reddened eyes, her disordered hair. Her colourless lips were quivering:

"You know that I am speaking the truth," breathed her appealing voice. "Ask Georges."

"I shan't ask anything," muttered the gaunt woman who was bending over her. "I do not care to have him mixed up with such a dirty business. You can lie as much as you like, it is your parents who have sent you. . . . I saw what your game was some time ago. . . . I ought to have been on my guard. . . . You ran after him, you lay in wait for him, you enticed him to your house. . . ."

"That is not true!"

"It is . . . he told me so!"

Yvonne rose, stunned, hardly understanding these insults.

"But I swear to you that if anyone imagines that we can be blackmailed, they are making a mistake!"

This time the child rebelled:

"You lie!" she cried. "You are a wicked woman. . . ."

Then losing her head, she called:

"Georges! Georges!"

Mme. Aubernon sprang at her and seized her by the wrists; but there was little need to push her, for the girl had dropped back on her chair, white-faced and tearless, her teeth chattering.

"He will not come," the woman continued venomously. "He knows only too well what you are worth, your whole family of mountebanks, and all the harm you have done us. . . . Your uncle is a madman who will end his days in prison. . . . It is no good for you to look as if butter wouldn't melt in your mouth, you know a thing or two. . . . You know that your father lives in Montmartre with some low creature, and that your mother has a lover. . . . No one would marry into such a family. . . ."

Yvonne listened with bruised heart. Her mother? She thought at once of M. Van den Kris. She hung her head. She suddenly felt ashamed of herself, ashamed of her people. Everything was collapsing round her, as though she no longer had a family, or anything. There was nothing left but a little bit of flotsam that was being kicked away, and perhaps they had the right to do it. . . . She gave in and stopped defending herself. In a hoarse voice she added :

"But what am I going to do?"

Her collapse brought relief to the woman :

"Oh ! well !" she said, "you will manage somehow. These things will happen. . . ."

Yvonne thought again of the little maid whom her parents had turned out. She felt humble and desperate, as the other must have felt outside the door of the villa. She rose mechanically, and having tidied herself in front of the looking-glass, she went out.

Before the parlour-maid, self-respect induced her to make a last effort, and she smiled at Mme. Aubernon as she said "Good-bye" in a small husky voice. Then when the door closed behind her, she stood for a long moment looking at it, wondering if all was really over, if no one would take pity and open it again for her.

Georges looked at his mother with a sidelong glance :

"Were you listening?"

He nodded.

"Wasn't I right?"

He did not answer. But after a moment, he said in a terrified tone :

"What if she went and killed herself?"

"Kill herself ! Nonsense ! . . ."

And she added between her teeth :

"What if she did. . . ."

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A wild wind blew through the firs, wresting from them a long-drawn plaint. It sniffed under the doors like a snarling dog and swept roaring up the chimneys. On the wall of the villa a shutter-blind, which had come undone, was flapping.

Adèle walked across the terrace, sheltering her lantern behind her blue apron. The impenetrable light hid sounds of terror, and the gusts pursued each other, shaking off great drops of rain in their flight. Ten paces away nothing could be seen. The leafless park creaked in the storm; the naked trees swayed like masts: the Flying Dutchman was about to sail. . . .

The maid pushed open the door of the outbuildings, to go up to the loft for some pears; the wind, with one rough blast, shut it behind her and blew out the light. Adèle stopped, unable to see anything; but little by little the window of the wash-house stood out against the darkness in a lighter black, and by this uncertain reflection the outline of things could be guessed at. The maid, by their help, knew where she was and moved on, gropingly. She mounted the stairs, intending to light her lantern when she reached the top.

Her lonely step sounded dismally through the old house. She walked straight on, for she knew her way. Suddenly she ran against something. Her heart leapt and she moved back terrified. . . .

What had they put there? . . . Something to dry? A sack? Standing still, wide-eyed, she vainly tried to realise what it was, and her shaking hand could not find the matches. At last, recovering from the shock, she resolutely drew near and stretched out her hand. . . .

It was not a cry that she uttered, but a howl, a heartrending call for help, a horrible clamour which pierced the night. She sprang forward as though electrified, dropping her lantern; and full of horror she shrieked, her arms held stiffly before her. The

thing she had touched was a hand, a cold hand at the end of an inert arm. . . .

An icy sweat broke out on her forehead and she dashed towards the staircase and fell down. Lying prone, she hunched herself up, contorted by horror, as if the cold hand were going to seize her. Then springing to her feet, she ran down the stairs, shouting:

"Help! Mademoiselle is dead! Help!"

She was heard as far as the lodge at the entrance. The refugees ran up, calling to each other. Étienne arrived first. He climbed the stairs, four steps at a time, and his lantern lit up the loft.

The body was swinging to and fro, frightfully elongated. . . . Yvonne was hanging.

Her fallen hair, loosened in the death struggle, hid her face. One of her arms was twisted, the palm turned back.

She had said: "It is the end. . . . my little mother," and with one kick she had thrown down the stool. . . .

The scared women halted on the last steps, gazing at their men who were unfastening the rope, while the gardener lifted the little figure.

"The house is cursed!" stuttered one of them.

Mme. Dubourg, on her knees at the foot of the bed, was choking with tears, pouring forth for the last time distracted words of tenderness. The sheet exactly moulded the long frail body, bulging in the middle and at the knees, and, under the crucifix the eternal peace of the folded hands could be divined.

"My darling, why did you do it? My beloved child! . . ."

She rose abruptly, wishing to raise the veil, but the saint prevented her; *he* had seen that swollen mask. It was not necessary that . . .

"But why did she do it?" sobbed Mme. Dubourg, again prostrate at the bedside of her dead daughter.

"My God! tell me why? It is abominable. . . . If it were my fault. . . . Do not leave me like this, take pity on me, tell me why?"

She was kneeling on the edge of the bed and it was startling to see the corpse lying on a couch, framed with moss, and the mother writhing on a green carpet decorated with little silver fishes: No, it was not a room to weep in. The consecrated palms, the crucifix, the funeral tapers, all clashed with the bizarre surroundings: the useless pieces of furniture, the huge cushions, the glaring screens. The light net curtains kept their frivolous appearance; on the walls, across the painted Japanese trees, shadows passed, shame-faced. . . . No preparations are ever made for the advent of Death. . . .

Suddenly Mme. Dubourg turned round and stared, wild-eyed, at Saint Magloire.

"Well," she said in a strangled voice, "this is not the end, you are going to save her. . . . You cannot let my girl remain dead. . . ."

She rose, with a set face.

"You are a saint after all. . . . You have worked miracles, I have seen them. . . . Well, you must work this one. You hear me, you will have to; it is my little child, she was happy before you came here, she was always laughing. . . . You must wake her up. . . ."

Her voice gave way suddenly, drowned in tears.

"Wake her, I beseech you, wake my little Yvonne. . . ."

The saint, supporting her, made her sit down. Nothing was heard but her sobs and the spluttering wick of the candle. In the night the mad wind rushed howling, flinging itself at times against the house, so that the shutters trembled under the impact.

For a long while the saint gazed at the dead child, then he took two steps forward and bent down. He drew the veil aside. . . .

The face, now, looked less tortured. The closed

eyes had found peace, the relaxed mouth was no longer distorted, and already the cheeks had lost that dreadful purple hue.

Little empty body, forsaken dwelling place. A breath wings its way upwards and this is all that is left. . . . One breath sufficed to give bounding movement to these stiffened limbs, to fill this crushed little breast with life and song, to lend brilliance to these eyes, to open these small pinched lips with laughter. Just one breath. . . .

He bent lower still, a prayer on his lips, and his large brown hands rested on the shoulders of the sleeping child. As he bent his visionary eyes upon her, his breath passed across the motionless face. Just one breath. . . .

Adèle, who was standing at the foot of the bed, began to tremble. In the midst of her tears, it seemed to her suddenly that she saw a change coming over the face of the dead girl, the features relaxing, the sunken eyelids swelling. . . . Shaken by terror, she thought she saw on the face, that had grown peaceful, a dawning line of bitterness, a wrinkle which drew down the mouth in a sorrowful smile. Was she emerging again from nothingness, was she conscious of her life once more? . . . Adèle put her hand before her mouth and bit her lip for fear of screaming. Her tears had dried in a moment and, seeing clearly, she looked on with wide-open eyes and throbbing heart. . . .

No, she must have been mistaken, overwrought. Yvonne's face kept its look of eternal indifference, and the saint, with pious hands pulled up the sheet.

Mme. Dubourg flung herself at her brother-in-law's feet.

"Magloire, I beseech you! . . . Do not leave her, give her back to me! . . ."

But he shook his head, with a far-away look, a whisper on his lips.

"Why try to keep her back? She had borne her share. . . ."

M. François Dubourg arrived about eleven o'clock. The editor of the *Français*, who had been asked to break the news to him, had found him in a Montmartre restaurant where, scarcely sober, he was finishing his dinner with his mistress. He had recovered his composure during the two hours of travel in the motor-car, but after he had shed the first tears, and had spent some time in the death-chamber, where there was a smell of ether mingled with the scent of flowers, he felt giddy. As a result of the shock, he was suffering extreme discomfort, his thoughts seemed to dissolve, he grew dizzy and felt his legs giving way under him. He pulled himself together, making an effort to realise the horror of this tragedy. Through a mist he saw his wife in tears and his daughter lying dead, and that same mist prevented him from thinking. As soon as he shut his eyes, his arm-chair seemed to slope and dip, and he quickly opened his eyes again, his forehead bathed in icy perspiration. He did not know whether the bitter taste in his mouth came from drink or from shame. If he had thought it could sober him he would have torn his face with his finger-nails.

With unsteady gait he approached his brother.-

"We were so happy, Magloire, so happy," he said in a thick voice.

Mme. Dubourg, worn out with weeping, could but repeat :

"The good Lord will forgive her, won't He? She was such a good little girl. . . . I want to believe, oh, my God! I want to believe, so that I may see her again some day. . . ."

Gérard stood silent in a corner near the mantelpiece. He was terribly pale and a deep furrow cut across his forehead. When he had heard of the suicide, he had understood at once.

He gave a few convulsive sobs when he entered the room, then he quieted down, and had not uttered another word. He was looking on. His eyes always came back to the mournful remains of the little dead girl. Was it only her clasped hands that swelled the shroud in that way?

It seemed to him as if he had suddenly aged. Never had he felt so grave, so self-possessed. He was proud of standing upright behind his parents as they knelt in prayer. He was the man. . . .

And gazing down at that little sullied body, he felt Hate plunging its claws deep down into his heart.

CHAPTER XI

ON the very day of Yvonne's funeral, the Dubourgs left Barlincourt in the evening, and everyone felt relieved when the saint had departed.

Only the fanatics of the Cité, sheltering in their ruined hovel, regretted his going; but they still possessed his doctrine, and that was the best part of himself. Harassed by the priest, disliked by the faithful, they soon changed their attitude when the old man was no longer there to guide them.

They began by renouncing the Church, but as, in spite of everything, they were still believers, they wanted to continue to worship God, and, without realising it, they created a schism. Every Sunday, when the bell rang for Mass, they met in an old barn which they had decorated in their own fashion. The eldest among them read the service, then a ropemaker, of whom the Evangelist was particularly fond, expounded the Gospel for the day, and they sang psalms, to the accompaniment of an accordion. They glorified Magloire as a saint of the martyrology; they added his name to the litanies, and after the "Remember," they regularly recited the prayer which the hawkers in Paris sold with his photo, but which had been disowned by the Evangelist himself.

In spite of their propaganda, the schismatics recruited but one adherent: Milot, who arrived one day in his beadle's uniform, offering to place his knowledge of the liturgy and his familiarity with the Church practices at their service.

He did not believe in this religion any more than in the other; but he wanted to be revenged on his employer and on the priest who had dismissed him; and on the other hand, since he had lost his situation

on account of Saint Magloire, he proclaimed the latter as the greatest man of modern times, so that he might acquire merit through having suffered for him. For the same reason he was proud of having lost his leg at Verdun rather than at the Château de Carleul, or in the Berlingot trenches, whose names sounded less heroic.

But the presence of this noisy fellow in the new church did not tend to attract seriously-minded people, and the priest of Barlincourt did not lose a single member of his flock thereby.

It angered the other strikers to see this handful of visionaries content with telling their beads while they waited for the coming of Justice, and they vented on them the rancour of their own misfortunes. They even came and attacked them in their retreat, breaking down what was left of the fences. These were the last gasps of the strike.

The strike funds were now completely exhausted, and the weaker spirits began to talk of re-opening negotiations. A week after the departure of the Evangelist, M. Aubernon saw his workmen return, humiliated and beaten.

"It is clear that he is no longer there to stir them up," he said triumphantly.

He did not understand that hunger alone was responsible for his victory.

In Paris, the return of Magloire Dubourg caused a certain excitement. The day after Yvonne's death, the newspapers began to talk about the saint and his family, and seizing upon an incident provoked by Gérard on the day of the funeral when he ordered M. Aubernon to leave the procession (which the other did without replying) they had insinuated that the young girl had no doubt been driven to suicide to save her honour. These discussions stirred up public opinion for a moment; they made a diversion from the anxieties of the day: the losses of the French troops

in Africa and the growing ravages of the mysterious influenza. People began to pry into the private life of the Dubourgs; they criticised the conduct of the mother; they descanted unreservedly on the liaison of the father; then, after a few days, they began to talk of something else. But the happiness of the family was gone: completely swept away by scandal.

In Paris, too, Saint Magloire had lost some of his popularity, but the humblest and most destitute turned despairingly to him. Ruined by unemployment, decimated by the influenza plague, they believed that the Man of Miracles alone could save them. The old man therefore resumed his trips to the suburbs. Bands of ragged women sometimes escorted him, singing beneath the windows when he went home; and the house of the Dubourgs, situated right in the middle of the town, was soon besieged all day long by unhappy folk, sick people and loafers; so great were the crowds, that it became necessary to call in the police to disperse them.

Marie Louise, imprisoned in her own house, saw no one but M. Van den Kris and from time to time Father Labry. As for François Dubourg, who was completely distracted by the eccentricities of his brother, he slept ostensibly at the hotel, attributing this unusual arrangement to his sorrow, and was only visible at lunch-time. He arrived with an anxious air, fearing the remonstrances of his elder brother, and also afraid that Magloire might bring back the germs of the epidemic in the folds of his big cloak.

"Is he here?" he would ask at once as he entered the house. And if Gérard answered "Yes," he would take a vaporiser and spray the whole room with some patent chemical that smelt vilely.

Sometimes the saint hardly spoke to him; on other days, on the contrary, he would drag him into the study and roughly rebuke him. The saint had such an ascendancy over his younger brother that the latter did not dare to reply. With lowered eyes, he listened, impenitent, while the Evangelist reproached him with

his conduct, and, as he talked, François gazed attentively at the trousers of the saint and the soiled cuffs of his velvet coat, and wondered how on earth he had managed to make himself in such a mess.

"He'll end by giving us all the plague," he thought as he held his breath.

As soon as his brother ceased speaking, François agreed *in toto* with everything he said, and made for the door at full speed without even thinking of saying good-bye.

"Ouf!" he gasped on the stairs. "I would rather have fifty kicks behind than such discussions. But what is he hoping to get at? By God! I shall end by not coming home at all. . . ."

Magloire Dubourg very rarely spoke of Yvonne; he seemed already to have forgotten her, and for that cruelty Marie Louise bore him a deadly grudge.

Gérard, like his parents, had drifted away from his uncle. He thought incessantly of his sister's tragic end, though he never spoke of it; and his secret sorrow, his shame, his longing for vengeance had turned him into a taciturn and violent man. He reminded his father of Magloire as a child.

He never left the house except to go to the studio, or if he did not go there, he would take his paint-box and sketch on the banks of the Seine, usually on the days when M. Van den Kris was coming.

But Yvonne's suicide was to have more serious consequences than these. Poor people regarded it as an example. Their whole outlook was changed by the theories of the saint, and they told themselves that it would be easy enough to lay down their burden. This life had been cruel: the next would be better. Who would not willingly take risks to achieve happiness in that uncertain lottery. . . .? Surely it was in order to show them the way that the saint had sacrificed his niece; one had but to follow her example. So the suicides began.

That strange epidemic, against which nothing could

be done, soon increased alarmingly. In a single week a hundred and twenty suicides were recorded in Paris alone. The population was demoralised by it. Old men threw themselves from windows; charcoal stoves were lighted in lodging houses, mothers flung themselves under Metropolitan trains with their babies in their arms; and every morning new cases of hanging were discovered. At Barlincourt, the lady from Paris, who lodged at the Mayor's house, was one of the first to kill herself, having given up all hopes of a miracle.

This contagious madness soon spread into other spheres; tradesmen, who had been regarded as well off, ended their lives with a revolver shot, and rich women asphyxiated themselves, driven by fear of some unknown horror—plague or revolution.

Magloire Dubourg alone was held responsible for all these tragedies and the hatred against him increased. From the pulpit at the Madeleine, a preacher condemned the suicides and anathematised the "man possessed" who inspired them. The Evangelist, however, continued to preach resignation and courage, and condemned those who fled from the world without contributing their share of effort in it. He even succeeded in checking these tragic follies among the lower classes.

But although he was able to make a successful resistance against the suicides, he could do nothing against the plague, which was blindly reaping its harvest. Day by day people heard of fresh deaths in their immediate circle; one funeral followed another at the door of the churches; the hospitals overflowed with patients, and a regular panic swept over terrified Paris. For a week people fought each other in the railway stations, the trains for the South were crammed, and despite the bad weather, motor-cars in hundreds were to be seen passing out through the Porte d'Italie. Whole streets seemed to be cleared of their inhabitants; from the Concorde to Auteuil nothing was to be seen but sleeping houses. with closed shutters.

In the populous quarters the infection was alive like vermin that could not be crushed. As soon as people in a lodging house heard the little dry cough that announced the terrible disease, they fled from the doomed patient. In this way, alone, uncared for, people died every day. When the neighbours could no longer hear either cough or rattle behind the door, they notified the municipality. The post-mortem doctors worked at furious speed, and stories were told of men buried alive.

Crowds gathered in the streets in front of the great white posters of the Prefecture headed "Preventive Measures." The curious read them and shrugged their shoulders. Leading physicians, with the serene indifference of learned men, explained therein the precautions to be taken. These people who lived in corruption were told that they must wash their hands with disinfectant before each meal, that they must never breathe through the mouth, that they must air their rooms frequently and maintain a moderate temperature in them, and that they must take care to have the bedding of the patients disinfected.

"And what are we going to sleep on?"

"Drink hot toddy indeed! Will they pay for the rum?"

"Nonsense, it's only rich people's fads. Don't take any notice."

At the Gobelins, at the Pont-de-Flandres, in the Saint-Paul quarter, there were positively hotbeds of infection which were marked by black crosses on the maps published in the newspapers. People were warned not to go into them on any pretext, and a deputy had even proposed that a sanitary cordon be established round these overcrowded districts to prevent any contact with the outside world.

It was in these accursed quarters that Saint Magloire spent his days, never leaving the bedside of the sick, who but for him would have had no nursing.

When he came home in the evening to the Dubourgs,

the other tenants shut themselves up nervously in their flats, and as soon as he had passed by the concierge hastily opened all the windows on the staircase.

"What is he meddling for, going to visit the sick?" said the neighbours. "Is he a doctor? He ought to be stopped, it is a public danger."

The newspapers, for their part, treated him as an alarmist, and accused him of spreading the epidemic by going, without any precaution, from the contaminated houses into districts which were still free. "When is this Dangerous Chatterer to be silenced?" asked the *Écho de France* in large headlines.

However, despite the terrible menace of the plague, all who had money sought relaxation. There was a frantic gaiety, a need for forgetfulness, and people laughed and spent their money, unwilling to think of the morrow.

"What admirable morale!" exclaimed François Dubourg with enthusiasm. "You might think the years of the war had come back. . . ."

Christmas Eve had never been so noisy, so gorgeous as it was that year. At the doors of the great restaurants and the theatres, shivering loafers watched the procession despite the drizzling rain. In Montmartre, outside a well-known cabaret, a hundred of them were crowded together. A large awning was stretched across the pavement and a carpet laid down; women stopped a moment as they alighted from their carriages, and threw back their furs, to show their gowns, their pearls, their bare skin.

Working girls, down at heel, sneered jealously. Their men dragged them away, exasperated.

"Come on, let's clear out, it makes me sick. . . ."

Between the curtains of the first floor there slid a thread of light, and the silhouettes of dancers could be seen passing. The music, so gay up there, took on a note of sorrow under the rain. The loafers looked on, with raised eyes, their feet in the cold mud. . . .

Those drawn net curtains were thicker than a wall, harder to cross than a frontier. It was another world, another humanity that lived there. . . . Joy and wretchedness, what a contrast of heritage!

Some little girls, under their breath, hummed the melodies. People stamped their feet to warm them, and the damp soles of their boots squeaked as they drew them out of the slush. A drunkard growled out insults as each new customer entered, but not too loud, for fear of the policeman.

"Ah, the saint ought to come and shake them up, those . . ." he repeated.

Then, suddenly, a hand put him aside, and before the bemedalled porter could make a movement, the man who had just elbowed his way through the crowd entered the restaurant and passed up the stairs.

"It is he! There he is. . . . It's Saint Magloire! . . ."

They sprang after him; but the porter and the policeman hurled themselves forward, while the negro in the red cloak shut the iron gate.

There was a sudden scramble; a woman slipped on the sticky pavement and fell, and when the noise died down, one heard, between two shouts, that the music was no longer playing.

Magloire Dubourg had just entered the dining room on the first floor, and by the time the guests at supper noticed him he was already standing on the musicians' platform. Then suddenly there was a burst of hooting.

People left their tables, rushed forward amid a clatter of broken crockery, climbed on chairs; and the old man was left alone in the midst of the crowd of merry-makers. They were not ill-disposed: they looked more inclined to chaff. Several of them wore cotillon favours on their heads: paper jockey caps, peasant women's bonnets. When the manager came up to turn out the Evangelist, the guests held him back.

"No, no, don't; it will be amusing. . . . Speech ! Speech !"

The saint towered above them. On account of the rain he was wearing the big cape of early days ; it covered him in its stiff folds, which were shining with water. He waited a moment, for the noise of their gaiety to die down, then he spoke.

"Are you sure you have the right to laugh?" he asked. "When the plague is reaping its harvest, when misery holds the poor in its grip, when lads sent out to sacrifice mark the African trails with their bodies, do you think you have the right to laugh . . . ? Your ghoulish rejoicings are a provocation to men and an insult to God ! Go away ! Go home !"

A booing arose in the crowded room and then ended in a huge burst of laughter. Jests flew to and fro.

"There you are, he's started, turn the handle !"

"Give the orator a glass !"

"Go on, Magloire !"

And, in the scramble, they trampled the broken glasses underfoot. The voice of the saint rose above the uproar.

"Laugh away ! Stuff yourselves as fast as you can. God will soon come to clear the table, you stupid louts."

The hooting began again, more boisterous than before. One guest, already drunk, wanted to fling himself on the old man who was insulting them.

"You may try to stifle remembrance with shouts and laughter; you may stop up your ears and turn away your eyes, but the catastrophe which is coming cannot be averted. . . . Laugh on, your gaiety will be but a drop in an ocean of tears. . . ."

"You are doddering, you old chatterbox," cried somebody. . . .

The saint did not hear.

"It is not Hell that I am predicting for you, but eternal life, the same kind of life that you have made for others. . . . No demons with red pitchforks;

only yourselves, who will have been your own executioners. . . .”

“That’s enough,” they cried. . . . “That’s not funny! . . .”

“Music, music!” called others. . . .

The pianist sat down again on his stool, at the foot of the platform, and attacked a negro air, hammering out the chords with all the strength in his arms. Some of the women guests sang with him. The men were yelling. From all sides celluloid balls aimed at the saint were thrown on to the platform.

“Verily, I tell you,” he continued, “the flood is not made of the waves of the sea but of the waves of humanity. . . .”

“What do we care?” cried a voice in the racket.

Some men in dinner jackets began whistling through their keys.

“Nothing will remain of your generation, when that flood has passed,” the apostle went on shouting, “not even whitened bones. . . . Yet one word would have sufficed to save you, the word for which Christ accepted the Cross: Love, love! . . .”

“Hurrah for love! Long live Saint Magloire!” screamed the half-dressed women.

The orchestra began to play again. The noise increased, and spread to the street outside: yells could be heard in the square. The saint turned his blazing glance on the women, who were drumming their heels on the floor:

“You who came out of the mud of the suburbs, and deny your miserable origin, beware!”

Then he turned to the men, who were gesticulating wildly:

“Beware, you who have done nothing for the cause of Justice. . . .”

Hooting, hisses, and music swamped his voice, but he could still be heard in snatches:

“You children of the rich, overdressed good-for-nothings who have always lived on the labour of

others. . . . Profiteers whose coffers have been swelled by wars and disasters. . . . Harlots who pay for your luxury with your shame. . . .”

He lashed them all, pointing with his finger; and, yelling and sneering, the revellers replied with insults.

“I curse you in the name of the world’s anguish,” cried the saint with a prophetic gesture.

Pushed forward by those behind, the men in the front row advanced threateningly upon him. Instead of throwing their harmless balls, they were now armed with walking-sticks and bottles.

“Put him out! . . . Go back to the negroes! . . . Throw him out! . . .”

A threatening crowd surrounded him.

“To Charenton¹ with him! . . . Sham priest. . . Go on, take him by the feet.”

Hands were already outstretched to seize him, when the saint, retreating a step, drew himself up and flung open the two lappets of his mantle.

“Come no nearer,” he roared. . . . “I bring you the plague in the folds of my cloak. . . .”

Thoroughly frightened, the crowd held back. Some with arched backs, pushed, and the whole mass retreated in a body. Sharp cries rose from the throng.

“The plague. . . . He has come from the hospitals! . . .”

Stepping to the edge of the platform and seeming suddenly to have grown taller, Saint Magloire pursued them with the thunder of his voice:

“Breathe, it smells of death. . . . Breathe, it is death that I bring to your feast. . . .”

Then panic ensued. The guests spread into the other rooms, with haggard eyes, and rushed down the stairs. A nameless terror had taken hold of them. Each one seemed to feel Death already in the air he breathed. In the cloak-room they snatched garments haphazard. Women stumbled and rolled beneath the feet of men whose one wish was to get away. On the

¹ Charenton—French lunatic asylum.

first floor the piercing screams of hysteria could be heard. And all, as they fled, looked so distracted that the curious crowd, massed outside, drew away from them as though the plague itself was hard upon their heels.

This latest demonstration of the saint caused widespread consternation in Paris, for, on the day after Christmas, two customers and a head waiter of the night cabaret died suddenly of the dread plague. People shuddered. . . . They began to wonder whether the old man, who had already shown his power to heal, had not also the power to slay. Some even whispered that it was he who brought this unknown scourge from Africa.

The newspapers attacked him with still greater violence, and accused him of stirring up hatred and fomenting disturbances. The revolutionary organs, afraid of this incoherent propaganda, also disowned him.

Then a report by Dr. Blum was published at the Academy of Medicine and read by Professor Porcher, his teacher. The young neurologist strove to demonstrate that the wonder-worker was a neurotic subject, suffering from religious monomania, and that his progress towards general insanity could be scientifically traced in his career. The report caused unanimous rejoicings: why, of course it was a madman they had to do with; why had not people said so before?

The young doctor examined the history of his subject from his abrupt departure from his mother's house onward: sudden and complete disappearance of family affection. This first attack had been preceded, as usual in such cases, by a period of unrest, the *Religious Melancholy* referred to by Morel and Broussais, which was sufficiently explained by the intense mental labour into which young Magloire Dubourg had thrown himself without preparation.

After this first attack came a long interval of respite; but the subject, far from taking the rest which was

essential in such a case, had gone to Africa; and climate, privations, absence of hygiene, fever, added to an excessive intensity of thought had encouraged the secret progress of the trouble. By degrees, a complete transformation was to be observed in the tastes, the sentiments, the opinions of Magloire Dubourg. By his own confession, from that period onward he lost appetite and sleep: warning signals of the culminating attack. His sentiments were so perverted that even the instinct of self-preservation disappeared: the Evangelist sought, and desired death. Finally the patient became the victim of an "*idée fixe*," he believed himself a messenger of God, and wanted to reorganise the world. Then came illusions of the senses, hallucinations; external impressions were no longer controlled by the intelligence. However, it was only a question of partial insanity. Apart from his monomania, Magloire Dubourg had fully preserved his reason.

"But watch him when he is preaching," Dr. Blum pointed out, "the attack is then at its height; and you will see a childish expression spread over his countenance; his gestures and his voice become very gentle, just as Carré de Montgéron in the eighteenth century observed in the case of persons subject to convulsions. Then, without reason, this childish gentleness gives place to an inexplicable fury; the subject grows excited, his eyes blaze, it is certain that at such moments he had lost all control over himself. He is but the sport of the caprices of the "*idée fixe*."

This memorandum, which was commented on throughout the press, dealt a rude blow to the reputation of the saint. People no longer took him seriously. It was only among the humblest, the very poor, that he was still listened to and admired: and there only because he promised them happiness, not because he loved them.

Had he paid attention to such things, he would have noticed that he was treated with less respect than hitherto. In the improvised hospital which had

been set up in the military zone with a view to at least a partial isolation of the contagious cases, the doctors gave him but a grudging welcome. Their science had to confess itself powerless. One single miracle would have been sufficient to bring ridicule upon them, and they followed him mistrustfully from ward to ward.

The sick who, in the early days, roused by a flash of hope, used to lift themselves on their pillows when they caught sight of the saint, now lay supine in their beds, all alike, with their poor shrivelled hands trailing on the sheets. The glassy look of the dying, the glittering eyes of fever, fastened themselves upon him. Said some disappointed :

“He cannot heal us.”

Others malignantly added :

“He doesn’t want to.”

When he went out, he mingled with the crowd of relatives who had come for news and were turning away, shivering and muddy, having handed in their oranges at the office. The tramping of these wretched folk formed his escort, and in front of the sad procession people instinctively looked for a hearse. As they passed, all stared at Saint Magloire, and drew away from him; in their glances he read the same entreaties and the same resentment.

One evening a little girl attached herself to him. Her leg must have been cut off recently, for she still walked awkwardly, pulling herself along with the help of her two cutches.

“Why didn’t you heal mamma?” she said in a poor little strangled voice. “I shall be all alone now. . . . Perhaps you still could: she only died to-day.”

The saint hastened on, sick at heart.

In the hospital which he had just quitted, the sick were so numerous that they had been obliged to lay them on stretchers, between the beds. Their breaths mingled, and death moved from mouth to mouth, like some dismal word of command passed on by soldiers. Each one cursed his neighbour.

"He fidgets so that I can't sleep."

"He coughs in my face. . . . He smells bad. . . ."

And when, at night, a rattle rose from a corner of the ward, they told each other casually :

"No. 18's going."

Then, turning over, they tried to sleep again.

"I can do nothing," the Principal Medical Officer, discouraged, had said, to the Evangelist. "As fast as you cure ten, a hundred more come in. We'd have to open up Paris, let in air. . . ."

Saint Magloire remembered those words, as he crossed the Étoile district with its deserted houses. Air. . . . Big windows open to the light. . . . And he gazed at those great vessels with their stone prows, at all those mansions and houses with closed fronts. They were like selfish faces that did not want to see. The owners were in Ésterel, at Saint Moritz, in their castles at Anjou. . . .

All along the Riviera, they were dancing for the poor. The "Amaranth Ball" at Cannes had produced more than sixty thousand francs. It was like fairy-land, said the papers. . . . At that same time, in the fever-barracks, for want of a mortuary, they were dragging the dead out under a tarpaulin and the winter rain kept the death-watch over them, weeping over their gleaming shrouds.

Saint Magloire wandered about for more than an hour in those silent streets; then, having thought things over, he betook himself to the Elysée.

He had hardly entered under the archway when a young man stopped him, and two plain-clothes policemen, who now followed the Apostle continually, hurriedly overtook him.

"What do you want?"

"To see the President of the Republic," replied Magloire simply.

The others looked at him bewildered, and the

handful of inquisitive people who had collected at once began to laugh.

"The President of the Republic does not receive people like that. . . . You must send in a request for an audience. . . ."

"I cannot wait," answered the old man.

The officer on duty having been notified by an orderly ran up.

"It can't be done in this way, sir," he said nervously, pushing away a group of idlers. "You must understand that the President of the Republic cannot receive everyone who comes in like this. . . ."

"Not even to save the lives of thousands of men?" said Saint Magloire.

"I cannot discuss the matter, sir, that is not my business. But I repeat that audiences are not granted in this fashion, even to you. . . ."

"Least of all to him!" cried someone in the growing circle of onlookers.

The Evangelist did not move. He raised his voice.

"Go and tell the President of the Republic that a man has come to ask him to rescue thousands of victims from the plague. Tell him that the orphan children of the suburbs implore him with their little hands outstretched. . . ."

The words echoed under the archway, and people came out of the corridors, while others ran up from the street. The crowd of onlookers was blocking the way, and in the Faubourg St. Honoré motor-cars brought to a stand-still were sounding their horns, for the crowd was overflowing on to the roadway. The dinner guests could not get in; they were surprised at finding themselves in the midst of such a mob; they wanted to know what was going on and tried to see over the heads of the crowd.

"What is the matter?"

"It is Saint Magloire making a disturbance."

They gave an exasperated "Ah!"

"Again! Oh, Lord. . . . Are they never going

to send him to prison! . . . Why, a man like that is a disaster! Let them take him to Charenton and have done with it. . . .”

In the uproar, the saint could still be heard disputing with the officer and the attendants; possibly in the hope that they might yet let him in. But suddenly, a violent jolt shook the crowd; the Republican Guards had come, and with fists and shoulders they drove the people away, throwing out indiscriminately on to the pavement guests in evening-dress and street loafers.

“Come . . . Move on! . . .”

In a moment the archway was freed, and two policemen seized Saint Magloire by the arm. A commissionaire rushed up.

“No, no, not that. Leave the gentleman alone. Orders. . . .”

The Evangelist, therefore, was pushed outside with the others. He had lost his hat in the scramble, and bareheaded, surrounded by shouting strangers, he felt for a moment dizzy, on the slopes of that moving street where the lights were dimmed by the rain. The commissionaire had followed him.

“Come, get into this cab,” he said, opening the door of a taxi. And he gave the address of the saint, which was familiar to everyone. A few shouts, a few hisses followed the car; then it was over.

The saint, although discouraged, was still unwilling to give up his projects: too many lives were at stake. He told the driver to take him to the offices of the *Français*, whose editor-in-chief he had often seen in Barlincourt.

That powerful personage received him himself, thinking that he might be able to get something out of the interview, but he soon regretted it. The saint told him briefly of his ill-luck at the Elysée, then he explained what he had wished to ask of the President. To prevent the epidemic from eating into the overcrowded houses, they must get the empty flats and

the mansions of the wealthy quarters put at the disposal of working-class families. He repeated what the P.M.O. had said to him : open up Paris, that way lay salvation.

The editor-in-chief, stupefied and dumbfounded, listened without finding anything to say in reply. He sat on the edge of his desk and looked in turn at the saint and the sub-editor, whom he had sent for and who was smiling and biting his lips. At last he let himself go.

"But really, Monsieur Dubourg," he interrupted (in the early days, he had called him "cher Maître," for want of a better name), "Your plan won't hold water. It is confiscation of property pure and simple that you are asking for."

Saint Magloire thought he had been misunderstood.

"No, no. It is only a question of occupying thousands of rooms that are not being used at all and of putting into them temporarily these wretched people that are condemned to death. When they know for what purpose their houses are being taken, the owners and the tenants will be the first to approve."

This candour, carried to the point of aberration, cut the ground from under the feet of the editor-in-chief. He even looked at the saint with more compassion than anger, and while he listened, he kept saying "Phew, phew!" as though he wanted to blow out some hidden fire. In the end, he exploded :

"But, my dear sir," he said as he took the saint familiarly by the shoulders, "I know what I am talking about : I have got a house in the Rue de la Pompe. Well, I should not think it at all funny to have a crew of ragamuffins installed there; they would make everything dirty, and leave me all their vermin, and then make off with my linen as a souvenir, with a little silver thrown in."

"And you don't think . . ."

"Come, come," continued the editor-in-chief, apoplectic, "I have good reason to be mistrustful;

I had some refugees in 1914. I know what they are : clothes washed in the bath and tobacco ashes all over the carpets. . . . If I have got to the point where I can afford a house of my own, I haven't done it in order to turn the place into a night shelter. . . ."

Magloire Dubourg gazed at him in amazement.

"So," said he, "I make my appeal to you in the name of the mothers who are suffering, of the children who are dying, and you answer me by talking about your linen and your carpets. . . . Do you know you are a criminal?"

The editor-in-chief turned away, exasperated, raising his arms to Heaven.

"It is no use to discuss it," he announced emphatically, "we don't talk the same language. . . . I am a matter-of-fact person, I don't go looking for the good of humanity in the moon."

Magloire Dubourg shook his head.

"Happiness will be on earth, and throughout eternity. . . ."

The editor-in-chief shrugged his shoulders :

"In eternity or in the moon," said he, "it's all the same to me. . . ."

The Evangelist turned towards the door.

"I shall find hearts less pitiless than yours," he said, looking round for the last time. "Cost what it may, they will follow me."

And he went out.

Then the sub-editor looked at the editor-in-chief, who was still agitated.

"That man," he said in a tone of conviction, "is a monster of goodness."

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When it was reported at the Prefecture of Police that Saint Magloire, at the head of a column of demonstrators, was coming down from the Boulevard de la Chapelle towards the centre of Paris, the officials thought at first that it was a case of one of those peaceful processions which he had frequently been

organising, so the news caused no anxiety. Usually these processions dispersed of their own accord, as soon as the Apostle had gone home. But other reports followed, urgent telephone calls from police commissioners, and it became evident that on this occasion the affair was serious. The band of rioters, its numbers swelling at all the cross-roads, had just entered the Rue Lafayette, routing a barrier of police; and new columns, at some mysterious word of command, were forming in all the populous quarters of the City. One such column came yelling down the Faubourg du Temple, following a cross taken from the Belleville Church, and another from the Gobelins marching behind a great black flag, came by way of the Boulevard de l'Hôpital.

The police sprang into motor lorries, platoons of Republican Guards set off at the double; and at the barracks the alarm was given in case of emergency.

The arrival of the first band on the boulevards was the signal for a panic. They came suddenly out of the Faubourg Poissonnière, preceded only by a long-drawn-out clamour which no one understood; then the tragic rabble came in sight. They were marching in disorder, perhaps three thousand of them, dragging in their train hand-carts, a laundry van which they were pulling along by the shafts, cabs that they had taken from their drivers. All these vehicles overflowed with shabby odds and ends, brats screaming with joy perched up on the bundles. They might have been a crowd of madmen coming back from a raid.

"To the Champs Elysées! To the swells' houses!" they shouted.

The rabble swept by like a gust of wind. In the light of the street the livid features of a demented woman might be seen as she held up her child to show it to the crowd; a child that had ceased to move. Some groups were singing. Standing on the seat of a carriage a man seemed to be making a speech, and

between two yells of the mob "the saint . . . the plague . . ." could be heard.

People were afraid of things that they could not clearly see: the most trivial utensils looked like weapons. One of the demonstrators, in mockery, was brandishing a long broom, a wolf's head which he lifted up to the windows; and shuddering women thought they saw the first pike of the revolution.

"To the Champs Elysées! . . ."

Behind the mob trailed the lame and footsore: a family pushing an overloaded cart, old men who could not keep up. . . . The uproar died away in the distance.

But far off, towards the Opera House, new cries could be heard, and distant clamouring, still more violent, suddenly filled the night and made the low sky tremble. The column which had just passed by had met the rabble which the saint was leading; and this army of the poor was now pushing its way, irresistibly, towards the Madeleine. Behind it, restaurants, even theatres, were emptied. With fear in their hearts people who had been dining late sprang into carriages or hastened towards the Metropolitan. They had but one idea now: to get home quickly and lock themselves in. Lights went out in the windows, as though they were afraid to show themselves; people muffled up and leaned out over the balconies, straining their ears to catch the terrifying noises that re-echoed on all sides. What tragedy was the night preparing?

Squadrons of Guards, dashing by amid the din of galloping hoofs and the rattle of sabres, added to the anxiety instead of allaying it. Ambulances, recognisable by their bells, could be heard in the distance.

"Let us get home quickly. . . . There are wounded. . . ."

The first encounter with Authority took place in the Rue Royale. The police-barrier which advanced elbow to elbow, with clenched fists, was at first obliged to retreat, forced back by the mass, but a detachment

arrived at the double, their truncheons hidden under their capes; and a bloody affray took place among the overturned carts, in the midst of shrieking women. Workmen with bleeding faces shouted as they defended themselves, knots of men rolled in the mud; gleaming objects were dragged out feverishly from the litter on the carts. Behind the police came the Guards, charging with sheathed sabres, and human bundles could be seen rolling beneath the hoofs of the horses.

The demonstrators retreated when the police, after having swept away the first band, turned upon the other, the more numerous of the two, which had come from Pantin. But these people had already broken through several police barriers and were expecting further attacks: they were ready.

As the police approached, like a dense black wall, a savage cry went up:

“Charge!”

And with one accord the rioters at the head of the crowd sprang forward, pushing their hand-carts before them like battering rams. Several policemen, struck full in the chest, fell beneath the wheels; others found themselves suddenly isolated. Caught in an entanglement of carts, paralysed by the press, bewildered, fending off blows, striking out at haphazard, they tried to extricate themselves from the howling wave that swept them bleeding along with it. A hundred yards behind, the Republican Guards were hesitating to charge, for groups of police separated them from the demonstrators; but the mob was upon them at once and the battle began. In the midst of the torrent, horses reared suddenly, and beating the air with their hoofs fell back into the eddying mass, smashing skulls as they came down. Men sprang up behind the riders, seizing them by the throat, while others, hanging on to their boots, pulled their feet out of the stirrups; and the Guards rolled down upon the roadway, in a crash of steel cuirasses. Their arms were hastily snatched from them: sabres, pistols. . . .

Suddenly revolver shots were heard, and the crowd, with renewed yells, rushed in pursuit of the last flying policeman.

A commissioner in a black overcoat, with a knotted scarf, shouted to the cyclists :

"Help. . . . Hurry up. . . . They must send big reinforcements."

After the column had passed by, the boulevard was filled with shadows, for the demonstrators were breaking the arc lamps with stones and bolts. It seemed as though the night were advancing with them.

Some cries of "Long live Saint Magloire" still rose in the tumult, but the clamouring of the multitude smothered them at once. In the darkness there could be heard the ringing sound of shop windows being broken. A woman, from an upstairs room, cried out "Help !" but her husband must have pulled her back, and the window closed upon her cries.

When the fray was over, the crowd hovered for a moment in uncertainty. All kinds of incongruous objects were being trampled underfoot : army caps, hats, broken wood, wrecked carts. The clamour died down; they were waiting for a word of command.

Cries of "Saint Magloire !" rang out like an appeal.

But the saint had already passed on with his band of followers by way of the Tuileries.

At that moment, a growing uproar was heard. Another column was coming by the Boulevard Malesherbes. They were the unemployed from Levallois, the rag-pickers of the zone among whom the plague was raging, the gas-fitters from Clichy, the firemen from the State Railways with their faces still black from the engines, a whole terrible multitude urged along by a woman, that same fortune-teller whom the saint encountered everywhere. She was marching at the head of the crowd, dishevelled and crying :

"Come with us, the Prophet Daniel is leading us !"

The roar of the two torrents mingled and the two-fold crowd poured into the Rue Royale.

Bandaged heads, bleeding faces, rendered the mob more alarming than ever. They were no longer ludicrous, with the vans they dragged along and their bundles of clothing: they were terrifying.

The black army invaded the Champs Elysées, and filled the avenue with its disorderly multitudes. It had begun to rain again: the night was sweating with agony.

The crowd could no longer be discerned in the shadows, but the life of it could be felt, and its fluctuations could be divined by the noises that arose. The wave of the plague-stricken passed up the avenue, seeking for the saint and the houses he had promised them. They had grouped themselves by streets, by districts, by factories. Scattered families hailed each other. The few lights that remained burning on the carts caught up faces with hollow cheeks, making them stand out of the invisible crowd in a saffron halo. More were coming, yet more. . . . The tragic flood rolled on unceasingly.

Under the trees, a noise of broken windows could be heard: the summer restaurants were being invaded in search of food. Motor-cars, caught in the crowd, were held up, smashed in, demolished; and women in evening dress could be seen fleeing, their cloaks wrenched off, their hair in disorder. It was a whirlwind of a moment only, a din of vociferations, then the great dark river continued to flow onward.

Round the Arc de Triomphe, where there had also been a fight, thousands of rioters were already assembled. Some had come up from Javel and Grenelle, others down from the Epinettes and Saint-Ouen. A large body had come from Puteaux, carrying with them unemployed from the motor-works, the factory women, workmen dismissed from the Arsenal and stevedores from the river-boats with striped jerseys and bare throats.

A rumour spread suddenly that Magloire Dubourg was in the Avenue de Bois, near the Rond-Point, and

that the distribution of quarters had just begun. The rabble at once moved forward, dragging its carts with it, and filed along in front of the police who were massed on the sidewalks, and did not dare to retaliate, though they were struck with stones and pieces of metal. During this time, the brawling started again in the Champs Elysées, where the Republican Guards charged with drawn sabres down the Avenue de l'Alma. The noise of this affray could be heard from the Étoile.

At the entrance to the Avenue Malakoff, progress became impossible. The great mass trampled and twisted; the wheels of the carts were locked, the ranks of people inextricably tangled. The crowd and the night were both black. Not a gleam of light. . . .

Suddenly great open windows were illuminated and the crowd saw some of their friends gesticulating against the glowing screen. A cheer rose instantly from the multitude, and a fresh eddy carried them closer to the house which had been invaded.

The Evangelist must be near at hand, but no one knew where. People learnt what was going on by snatches or phrases that floated over their heads. There was a report that the whole of the Avenue Bugeaud had already been allocated, and that another mob was coming up by the Porte Dauphine.

In the adjacent streets, which were also in darkness, it was possible to move about. Rowdy groups came and went, doors were broken in.

There, too, a few houses had been invaded, but the assailants had hardly made themselves masters of the buildings when they seemed to hesitate, and they came downstairs again quickly, on the alert, afraid of being hemmed in. Some hooligans were passing out bundles; silver was being packed up in silk curtains.

"Let's go home, they're looting. It will come to a bad end!"

In the Avenue Bugeaud, everything had been managed at the beginning in the most orderly fashion;

the saint had gone first into the houses, and had dragged out of the terrified concierges vague replies that might have been taken for consent. The selected families moved in quickly, clinging to their few bundles; but they had no sooner settled down than parents and children alike began to feel ill at ease in these huge apartments. Accustomed as they were to live in close proximity to each other; able, by stretching out their hands, to touch all their four walls at once, they were lost in these great rooms with the big bay windows, these suites of drawing rooms, with their impressive portraits and all their museum furniture, that represented neither the cupboard nor the dresser of their daily life. The peace of these dwellings, whose thick walls, portières, and carpets muffled all noise, impressed these people, who were only used to great bare-walled barracks where every sound echoes.

To dispel their unrest and banish their feeling of isolation, they soon opened the windows to watch the others swarming in the streets, or they went out on to the landings. All these new tenants soon came together, and seated on the stairs, they began to chat. They felt better there, less uncomfortable. Some did not dare to stay at all and went away with their belongings.

Beggar women accustomed to spend their night in the doorways, homeless folk with dripping garments, were sleeping pell-mell on the carpets and the sofas with a cushion under their heads. Not one of them had dared to undress and lie down in a bed.

In small houses, shady characters broke the furniture and rifled everything as soon as they got in. Other occupants caught them at it and were scandalised.

"You have no right. . . . We shall tell the others, . . . You are thieves. . . ."

Then rows had begun. One workman had been killed with a knife by some ruffians whom he had tried to tackle. Little by little, the houses allocated by the saint were emptied. All their late inmates gathered

outside and began to grumble. Men who had come up drunk from the cellars yelled louder than anyone, uttering aimless threats.

"We've had no food since midday," screamed the women, "let him work a miracle. He has only to say so, and we shall get something to eat. . . ."

The crowd was already less dense. Uneasy groups were setting out for their own districts.

When Saint Magloire came out of the last house in the Avenue, there was a rush towards him. In the din of their cries one could hear :

"We want food! If the police come, what are we to do?"

"They've killed a man."

"There are people plundering. . . . Look, they are loading their carts."

They eddied about the saint, jostling each other. Disputes broke out in their midst, men shouting into one another's faces.

"Well, what if they are plundering? What next, what belongs to the rich belongs to us. . . . He said so. . . ."

"You just came to rob!"

"What if I did. . . . We're sick of only plucking pigeons."

Shoving with their shoulders, dealing out blows in the crush, the burglars pushed their way into the front ranks, and soon the saint had none but ruffians around him. They were mostly very young; pallid youths with evil faces and a handkerchief knotted round the neck; others were older and better dressed, with the garments and the air of bullies out of small public-houses.

"They can do nothing to you," cried the saint to the helpless crowd. "Let each one go without fear into the house that has been assigned to him. . . . No one has the right to turn you out and drive you back to your graves."

But the clamouring continued :

"Food! Food!"

"The police will come. They're stealing everything."

The saint raised his arms.

"I forbid you to loot," he shouted. "Seize the thieves!"

The ruffians jeered at him:

"Let 'em come and try!"

The old man went on:

"I hear that riots broke out this evening, that places have been demolished, pillaged. I condemn these crimes. . . . Those who commit such deeds do not belong to us."

The evil gang laughed yet louder. Jests flew backwards and forwards.

"We haven't got a château at Barlincourt. . . ."

"He's entertaining us so as to give the 'cops' time to come up. . . ."

It was the scum of the riot that was swarming now about the saint, those who had followed simply to break in and rob.

The others had gone off, group by group. They had tramped for hours in the freezing mud; and the wind that blew in gusts, driving the sleet before it, had cooled their fever. They wanted to flee in solitude, through the side-streets, for fear of the police. In the night the measured footfalls of marching troops could be distinguished.

There were not more than a few thousand left between the Place Victor Hugo and the Avenue du Bois.

Now that they no longer felt the support of the crowd stretching out indefinitely behind them, their boldness disappeared, they scented danger.

"Where is Magloire? He must make another speech. . . ."

"We are betrayed. . . ."

Dead drunk, or mad, the fortune-teller, dishevelled, was singing at the window of a first-floor room, and the rabble were egging her on with their shouts.

Then to the north, a sudden glow lit up the sky; a

lofty red cupola raised itself against the darkness, its tragic gleam growing and fading at the will of the flames : a great fire had broken out in the direction of Belleville. . . .

A roar went up. A great "Oh !" of surprise. Then cries of fear, oaths. Rage seized upon them, a savage fury that made them see red.

"They're burning our houses. It was a trick to get us away from our homes. . . . They're burning the poor districts to stop the plague. . . ."

They all screamed together, gesticulating, brandishing the sabres taken from the Guards; and a stampede swept down the Avenue Bugeaud.

"The saint has betrayed us. . . . They're burning our houses. . . ."

A blind fury seized them. Revolver shots, fired at random, were heard. Broken window-panes crashed down noisily. In the upper floors the burglars hastily ended their job by throwing bundles down to their accomplices.

"Death to Magloire ! Kill him. . . ."

The fighting began, an invisible massacre in which nothing could be distinguished but the cries of the wounded and the resounding blows of the attackers. But suddenly a shout stopped them.

"Dragoons !"

They had no time to pull themselves together : already the gallop of the cavalry was upon them, coming from the Porte Dauphine, and all along the Avenue, there was the scramble of a *sauve-qui-peut*, a screaming flight, a gasping, jostling mob, while the strugglers rolled beneath the horses' hoofs.

At the same moment a similar charge came up the Avenue du Bois at full speed, and there the same flight, the same cries followed.

In the darkness horses broke their legs against the abandoned hand-carts, and horsemen fell to the ground. Behind the cavalry came the police, capturing small bodies of rioters, whom they struck down.

As one platoon, bayonet in hand, flung itself upon a group, the men sprang back, and some of the women fell to their knees.

"Do not strike!" someone cried, throwing himself before the police.

It was Saint Magloire, very pale, with a little blood on his face. The police surrounded him. The officer commanding the charge sprang from his car and ran up when he understood what was happening.

"Do you arrest me?" the saint asked him, recognising the man who, a few months before, had urged him to leave Paris.

The Prefect looked at him, troubled. He remembered that at their first meeting the saint had said to him: "You will not dare!" And now, this evening, he had left his little girl at home, dying, struck down by the scourge. An unconquerable fear filled his heart, the fear of some mysterious connection between the step he was about to take and the little life that was trembling in the balance. . . . The policemen looked at him, waiting for his orders.

But was not this night of pillage, this abortive revolt, the collapse of the power of Magloire Dubourg? Would not the plague come to an end too, directly his dictatorship over the populace had ceased?

"Yes! I arrest you!" he cried in a hoarse voice.

Four men flung themselves at once upon the saint and dragged him away.

A workman, with his temple cut open, lay on his back in his death agony.

CHAPTER XII

MAGLOIRE DUBOURG found it restful to be alone in the villa at Barlincourt, where Death seemed to have left something of its silence. Old Étienne cooked his meals and looked after him as best he could; the saint hardly ever spoke to him.

In spite of the cold he would remain seated on the steps of the terrace for long hours, motionless; or on frosty mornings he would walk dreamily about the park, often forgetting the hour of lunch. The frosted twigs cracked beneath his step like barley-sugar. The air was keen and cruel. Under the rosy sun, the leafless trees where the mistletoe nested lazily trailed their misty shadows on the ground; on the branches the snow had laid its soft white down.

His glance alighted on things without seeing them; nothing could distract him from his reverie. One memory pursued him: the great Forest to the south of Ouessou. It is an impenetrable world of lianas, of trees and plants, where never an axe has hewn a path-way, a still virgin domain, vast as a whole country. From the rotting soil to the tops of the giant citrons, it is a tangle of verdure, cascades of sticky branches, a formidable confusion of mingled boughs, of stifled plants, of slender palms, of luxuriant undergrowth, an inextricable jumble where the long shafts of the lianas, burnished like bayonets, may be seen between the leaves. Even game cannot find its way into that Forest. Only snakes glide in, white ants swarm there, and skipping monkeys race along the green highway of the branches. The blacks have named this mysterious region "*Djamba na mangombe*": the forbidden place.

That prophetic phrase haunted him. Was it not for him that a blind man crushing millet had spoken

one day of the "forbidden place?" He had left Africa, abandoned his faithful negroes, crossed the seas and vainly preached the word of God to stony hearts that did not understand. *Djamba na mangombe*. . . .

On the evening of his arrival the evicted workmen, who were still housed in the lodge, would not open the gate for him. The drunkard growled behind the iron gates that "he was responsible," that the gardener was out, and that he was, "so to speak, the caretaker"; if the accordion-player had not interfered, the saint might have had to stay outside. As for the third tenant, he had some weeks earlier joined the schismatics in their hovel, and on Sundays he put on his white blouse to hear Mass, which now drew only a congregation of five or six.

Milot had been one of the first to withdraw from the sect. In his double capacity of Colonial veteran and dismissed beadle, he regarded himself as the sole repository of the doctrine of the Apostle, and after serious disagreements with the leader, he had resumed his liberty: Milot insisted on genuflexions and consecrated bread, the other would not hear of them. Agreement was therefore out of the question.

This rupture had not prevented Milot from continuing to defend the saint, far from it. Now when everyone was deserting him, when the newspapers were overwhelming him with insults, when Dr. Blum was building up a reputation for himself by proclaiming him a madman, the cripple remained faithful to his cause, as obstinately determined to extol the Evangelist as he had once been to disparage him. He had even quarrelled with the Trembler, who, once more a victim to his palsy, blamed the saint for all his sufferings.

At Dumarchey's, where he now behaved as though he were the landlord, Milot argued with the factory hands, who were being taken on again, a few at a time, after they had been reduced to the greatest straits and had run up debts that it would take months to pay off.

"He told you, Saint Magloire did, that your pockets were empty and that you would soon go bust," he bellowed at the counter. "It takes more than an eight-day strike to re-make the world and keep the scum from getting on top."

"See here," interrupted one of the workmen, indicating the Dumarchey girl with a wink, "we haven't got lady friends to fatten us up. If you want food, you've got to scratch for it."

This did not convince the cripple.

"Those are reasons that won't wash," he went on, brandishing the bottle of vermouth. "If all the poor devils had some in their stomachs, it is a certainty that the masters couldn't make themselves sick of indigestion any longer, while the others are rotting in hospital. But it's no good you ranting against the Army. What you need is to be stuck into a uniform with a number on your tunics, and a non-com. at your heels, to put some courage into you. As soon as you get into civvies, with your Sunday hats and your fifty-franc suits, you're good for nothing. These damned profiteers could make you spit up everything down to your blood, and the cowards that wouldn't fight could make you pay the cost of the War; and none of you opened your mouths. Why, I'm ashamed to be a man. . . . If the whole nation had agreed to meet on the same day at the *Chambre des Députés*, to say they'd had enough of it, you'd have seen that they'd have rushed the laws through quick enough. Only, the fellows never budged. They'll come down in their hundreds and thousands to the Boulevards to see the Carnival go by; they'll tread on each other's toes for a whole day outside a station to see Charlie Chaplin steam in, but when it is a case of something worth while, there's not one of 'em will come out of his house for it. Well, then, they'd better not grumble so much; it's not hearts they've got—it's dish-cloths! If only they'd listen to Magloire. . . ."

But all his eloquence was of no avail, and except

for the landlady, who swore by him, he had so far converted nobody. Moreover, in proportion as he gained a footing in the house, he grew less and less revolutionary, and his demands for social reform became purely theoretical; and when it was decided that, for the sake of appearances, he and the Dumarchey girl should get married, which made a landlord of him, his evolution was still further hastened.

By degrees, in all good faith and without realising it in the slightest, he developed into a sworn opponent of all his old theories. In particular he set his face against violence—perhaps to save the glassware—and while perpetually sheltering himself behind the name of Saint Magloire, he constituted a one-man party of moderate anarchism, anti-clerical catholicism and pacifist militarism. All this gave him an excuse for shouting as loud as ever, and attacking all men without ever agreeing with any.

Apropos of nothing at all he would begin a discussion about the transmigration of souls—which he compared to wine decanted from one bottle to another—and he placidly referred the task of pouring oil on the troubled waters of society to the centuries to come. So great was his admiration for the saint that finally he decided to dedicate the inn to him. He ordered some pots of paint, climbed up the ladder himself and painted on the signboard in huge letters:

“THE SAINT MAGLOIRE.”

Then, down below, in somewhat smaller type:

“GRAND BALL ON SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS.”

The absurd juxtaposition caused some laughter at first, but Milot was very dignified about it, and when after the January riots Magloire Dubourg came back to Barlincourt, he paid him a formal visit, with his

two crosses pinned to his breast, to ask permission to keep his name over the inn.

The townspeople had been distressed to see Saint Magloire so broken and aged in a few months; but the hands at the Aubernon works looked askance at him.

"Why did they arrest all those hundreds of fellows and send them for trial, when he was at the bottom of it all and they haven't done a thing to him? It shows he was in with the Government all the time."

They were only repeating what they read in the papers. The Government, when it decided not to prosecute the Evangelist, knew quite well that it was destroying his popularity. Imprisonment would have made a martyr of him; left at large he was nothing but a traitor.

At first the saint's return caused M. Aubernon a certain amount of anxiety; but he soon realised that the propagandist was no longer to be feared.

"This business has brought my fellows to heel," he confided to M. Quatrepomme. "I'll take them back by degrees, I shall not hurry about it; the bad time they've had will do them a lot of good. To begin with, I am going to stop the Saturday half-holiday and put them on piece-work again."

For the moment the only annoyances the manufacturer had to put up with came from Milot. - Now that he was independent, the cripple was revenging himself for his dismissal, and backed up by all the factory-hands, who were his customers, he had declared war to the knife on his former employer. Whenever M. Aubernon encountered him, he looked the other way, to avoid seeing Milot's expressive grimaces and to ignore the insults growled at him.

Every evening at the bar the former beadle told stories of the private life of the Aubernons: everything he had heard from the maids in old days, everything he had found out for himself, with additions of his own to produce a better effect.

He would explain to the uninitiated how in 1915 Aubernon had begun to make money by manufacturing hangars for the army which were so unsteady that the slightest breeze was enough to blow them over; and how in 1920, he had declared himself bankrupt to avoid paying War Profits Duty.

Out of the suicide of little Yvonne he built up a romance that might well have roused jealousy in the breast of François Dubourg, and the story gained a notable success with the audience that came to drink its "apéritif" at the inn.

"It was a murder!" he ranted. "As long as I live they shall not forget the little girl they killed. I'll find a fresh dodge every day to poison their lives, and if they don't die of remorse I'll make them burst with rage. . . ."

It was this that put the idea of the blackboard into his head. One day, without warning anyone, he hung outside his window a sort of big school blackboard on which he had written in white paint:

"Petit Louis has been condemned to death, but there are others that have crimes on their consciences who are not even in prison. Wait!"

The hands going down to the workshops collected round the board; by midday all Barlincourt had filed past it, and the workman Mathieu, half-servile, half-contemptuous, went and reported the affair to M. Aubernon.

Next day the wording was changed to another variation on the same theme: chips of the old block who went about seducing virtuous young girls and driving them to their death. Every day Milot, intoxicated by success, found something new to say, dragging father, mother, and son in the mud, but taking care never to mention names.

The manufacturer was soon driven to desperation, defenceless as he was in the face of this malicious and damaging campaign. He consulted his lawyer, who advised him against an action in a case that was so

difficult because no direct attack had been made, and suggested that simple official pressure would be preferable, the Mayor being exactly the right man to exercise it. Unfortunately, M. Quatrepomme declined at once, though he warmly assured M. Aubernon of his good-will. Now that Milot was an inn-keeper his vote was an important one, and the Mayor had no intention of losing it. After that M. Aubernon said no more, though he brooded over some vague revenge. He pretended to ignore the whole business. But every day when, huddled in the corner of his car, he passed the café, he made out a word or two on the black-board, or found an absurd figure, roughly drawn, in which he could not fail to recognise himself, round as a barrel and wearing a hat too small for him. Below, to assist identification, the former beadle had written: "Sham-bankrupt and the father of a murderer."

"You'll end by landing us in prison," said the Dumarchey girl, trembling.

But Milot mocked at the danger.

"Don't worry, my microbe. He won't budge. I've got him as tight as a sausage in its skin. . . ."

He saw himself developing into a leading power of the country-side; and now that he was daily called upon to arbitrate between customers quarrelling over law-suits, he dispensed justice in front of his gramophone like Saint Louis under his oak.

In the presence of the saint he lost all his glibness and listened to him respectfully, feeling himself to be near a being from another sphere. He could not always follow Magloire in his vast and disconnected arguments, but he understood a few scraps; and when, still dizzy, he left the King's Domain, it seemed to him astounding that men could be content with such degradation when it would have been so easy to turn this unjust world into a garden of Eden.

All property seemed a crime to him—always excepting his own café—and in the evening, still excited,

he would proclaim the advent of good-will on earth and universal love, declaring that all who did not agree with him were "fat heads" and "half-baked."

Adèle also came several times to see the Evangelist. Though her employers had disowned their relative, she still regarded him with the instinctive veneration of the first evening; and she and Milot would sit beside him, both of them captivated, finding again the credulous hearts of their childhood, and listening to the words of joy that rose like ring-doves against a Spring sky.

The maid had no one but the saint to whom she could talk of her Louis, and, in spite of everything, she hoped that he would still do something to save the boy's life.

One day she showed him something which the prisoner had written her. Petit Louis had ended it with "I'll see you soon," and Adèle, kneeling at the feet of the Evangelist, broke down and sobbed.

Petit Louis, lying on his back, with wide open eyes, was dreaming of Guiana. It was fair as Paradise. On the day when his counsel had come to tell him that the Cour de Cassation had rejected his appeal, he had been seized by something closely resembling a fit, his head rolling about on his shoulders, his eyes glassy; and they had had to wait until he recovered before they could make him sign a petition for mercy. After that he had gone asleep, exhausted, but when he awoke in the early morning his fear had vanished like fatigue after repose. Can a man believe he is going to die when he still feels his heart beating hard, and the keen desire for life still swells his breast and holds his muscles taut. . . . Can all that be cut off? No . . . impossible, not to be believed.

He had but one hope left—transportation—and to that he clung with savage confidence. Far off, at the end of a black tunnel he could see a sunlit vision. A sky for ever blue. Half naked women, fast rivers

across which escape might be made. . . . At times he fell half asleep, and in his dreams he saw himself, his feet shackled, his hands tied behind his back, running in little jumps towards that tropical garden where men in blue were beckoning to him. If he could get out of the tunnel he was safe; but behind him he could hear footsteps running; there were a whole pack of them, the warders, the judge, Deibler, and M. Aubernon. "Buck up!" the men in blue cried to him from the other end of the tunnel. Then, with the sweat pouring down his face, he jumped quicker and quicker, he tried to run despite his bonds; and then, suddenly tripping, he fell flat, face forward. . . .

That woke him abruptly. He turned over on his bed, and propped up on an elbow he looked at the sky imprisoned behind the bars. How good it would be to be out of doors! . . . He thought of Barlin-court, of sentimental rambles in the Bois Noisette. He remembered his Paris pals; they must often talk of him with the women, in the little bars; and a naïve pride filled him at the thought. He saw them standing round the marble counter, their glasses filled to the brim. His mouth watered with envy. No, he had not known how to get the best out of life. If he could only live it over again, what a good time he would have! . . .

He had grown used to this prison life. It seemed less painful to him than during the other sentences which he had served, because he was not obliged to work. He ate, he smoked, he often played cards with his two warders: he was almost happy. On Mondays he greedily breathed in the free Sunday air which seemed to come from their tunics, and during the rest of the week he thought about it.

He listened to the clocks striking the hours: the Town Hall, the Cathedral, the Prefecture. . . . In the yard, when he took his exercise, he often saw a prisoner doing hard labour, always the same thing; and with a wink he would briefly bid him good-day.

In his thoughts the man had become a friend, and it annoyed him when he failed to see him.

One evening as he lay on his bed listening to the rain tapping on the slate roof, one of the warders asked him :

"What would you like to have? What would please you?"

Petit Louis was gazing ahead with unseeing eyes, in a doze, thinking of nothing at all.

"I would like to go on always like this," he answered, with his head in his hands.

The other, a stout drunkard with a grey moustache, shrugged his shoulders.

"You know that's not possible. You must be reasonable. . . ."

Louis did not like this warder. He was not ill-natured, but after thirty years of prison life he was no longer a man but a stupid and unfeeling piece of mechanism, like the bolts and bars he handled. He might have retired, but, being a bachelor, he was afraid of the empty life in which no rules or regulations would divide the hours, and, being a creature of habit, he preferred the prison. He spent the day grumbling against his job, so saturated with alcohol that the very first glass made him drunk, and promptly he bullied the prisoners, whom he regarded as his oppressors.

"When I think that but for these blackguards I might be at home," he could be heard shouting in the corridor.

He forgot that his "home" was a cell like theirs, with the self-same bars. After supper, when they were all three playing "manilla" with Louis, he would grow maudlin over his own hard fate.

"The fact is," he whimpered, "it is us that are the prisoners. . . . When they've done their time, they go out and they're free; but we have to stay here and spend our whole life in the beastly hole."

He would turn to Louis and look at him with bleary eyes, wagging his head.

"The only ones I'm sorry for, they're the ones like you, that are going to be guillotined. That's unpleasant. . . ."

And he would hand him the pack of cards.

"Come, it's your deal. . . ."

These allusions made Petit Louis's mouth suddenly go dry, and his throat contract. But he felt the pitying look of the other warder upon him, and deliberately, to show off, he began to whistle as he shuffled the cards.

"Here's good luck. . . . It's for you to play."

His aunt had twice come to see him, and on those evenings they had rum to drink, which the warder had smuggled in.

"The old girl is more wide-awake than she looks," drawled the murderer. "She slipped me the money on the sly and the chief never twigged."

"She was crying, wasn't she?" asked the new warder.

Louis shrugged his shoulders :

"Oh, well, women, you know. . . ."

He had even been ashamed when the old servant, choking with tears, had taken his hands between the bars and kissed them. His hands that had killed. . . . But that night, when he was all alone, his face turned towards the wall, he had begun to tremble.

"Why had she cried so much? Was it because she knew that the end was coming?"

Terrified, unable to sleep, he watched in the silent night for the heavy jolting of the cart, the murmur of the crowd and the hammers of the assistants.

When the town woke up, and the gleam of daylight in his cell grew brighter, when the warder came in—alone—his tortured heart seemed to burst, and, for the first time, doubled up, with his head on the hard plank-bed, he had wept with irritation and rage.

In spite of everything, he did not believe that he

was going to die, and he did not even think of his appeal for mercy: his faith in Saint Magloire was too strong for that. He did not know how the saint would manage it; but he would not let him be killed, of that he felt certain.

He often spoke of him to the warders; he talked also of his old employers, and of Mlle. Yvonne.

"It is funny that with connections like that you should have done such a thing," murmured the drunkard.

Then coming back to his obsession, he began comparing the life of the prisoners with that of the warders.

"Later on," he explained to Louis, "they've promised us central heating. That will be better for everybody, even for you fellows."

Then he quickly corrected himself.

"It is true it won't matter a tinker's curse to you. . . . You won't feel the heat or the cold. . . ."

Petit Louis put up his hand to his throat, with a mechanical gesture, and he felt his lip twitching. The warder did not say these things out of malice: it seemed quite natural to him, and he lost his temper when his younger colleague told him to be silent.

One evening when he had drunk too much, he began fumbling about among his memories to describe the last execution at which he had been present. He was sitting under the lamp, leaning his elbows heavily on the table, and the brim of his cap threw a shadow across his face.

"It was an affair very much like yours," he related in a toneless voice. "Only it was an old man that he had killed instead of an old woman. . . . You can't think how plucky he was! . . ."

With his neck craned forward, with pinched lips, his cheeks more colourless than ever, Petit Louis was listening.

"The disgusting part of it," continued the drunkard, "is when they throw the head down with the

body: They tip it, like a hod, into the big basket, and you see the funny cut-off face, with the eyelids still blinking. . . ."

The second warder interrupted, in a rough voice:

"Here, shut up, you oughtn't to talk of things like that in front of him."

But the old man persisted:

"Why not? . . . It is science, as you might say, instructive information. You want me to tell you, don't you, my lad?"

Louis's white lips murmured a hoarse "Yes," and he nodded his head.

"Of course it is better for him to know," the old man continued. "Well, what upset me most, was when we were taking him to the cemetery. I was seated on the bench, by the driver; then, behind us, we could hear that it was still fidgeting; as if it had been kicking in its basket. . . ."

At that moment, with a reflex action, Louis's leg shot out and he gave a great kick at the table. He was livid, the pupils oddly dilated in his staring eyes. He tried to force a word out of his parched throat.

"All right, that's enough," the other warder said in a tone of command to his mate, as he rose to his feet, quite white. . . . "You go to bed. You're even too drunk to play cards."

Petit Louis had just gone to bed; the two warders had remained in his cell that night, and with a sort of uneasiness they watched his slumbers. The thought that next day, in a few hours, it would be over, disturbed them. They would fold up the mattress, with a turn of the broom they would sweep up a few loose hairs, and a ragged shirt; they would see a white back disappearing with short steps down the corridor. Ah! how short it is, all of a sudden, that corridor that leads to the street. . . .

"I don't know whether it's the change in the weather, but I am shivering," muttered the younger.

The old man was reflecting.

"You will notice," he said to his mate, "that as soon as the knife falls, when it goes 'chhu,' half the people always put their hands up to their throats; they can't help it."

The other, feeling his limbs growing weak, wanted to put some courage into himself.

"After all, he is a rotten little scoundrel. . . . Five convictions at his age. And that poor old woman done in, for no reason at all."

But the drunkard was not listening to him. He was fingering a thick woollen jersey that Louis had thrown on the table when he undressed.

"I'd like to put this on one side for myself, what do you think?"

They both sat down on their stools. They heard eleven strike on all the clocks, and the new warder was afraid that the condemned man might wake.

"If he were to suspect that it is to-night and begin to ask us questions," he said in a whisper. "What should we tell him?"

The old man was filling his pipe.

"Bah! A little sooner or a little later, what does it matter? I've known some that wouldn't even be kept awake by it. Why, there was one, at Melun. . . ."

"Don't talk so loud."

They had drawn closer together. The yellow star on their caps made a little point of light. Petit Louis was snoring. . . .

They were still chatting when they heard steps in the corridor. The old man put out his pipe with a jab of his moistened thumb, and stuffed it in his pocket. They stood up.

The chief warder pushed open the door, and, standing aside, allowed someone to pass in.

Suddenly they recognized Magloire Dubourg. The saint had bared his head, and, without speaking, he

looked for a long moment at the condemned man, who was still sleeping.

Then he turned to the Procureur de la République, who had accompanied him, and said in a low voice :

"I thank you, sir."

The official with a gesture explained that he had nothing to do with it :

"Directly you had the permit. . . . Well, then, I will leave you with the warders. We will come back when it is time to wake him, at five o'clock."

It was the rattle of the door, as it closed, which awoke Petit Louis.

He sprang up, gazed stupidly about him, then a child-like smile parted his lips. He must have thought he saw a vision. . . .

"Ah ! you have come to see me !" he said, jumping up from his bed, his face flushed with pleasure. "I always said you would. . . . With you, I was never afraid, I was always at ease. . . ."

The saint stretched out his arms to him.

"You were right, my child."

Petit Louis sprang towards him, then pulled up short. His face, suddenly, had changed. He was livid, with two great blue hollows round his eyes, and those horrified eyes were fixed, riveted like two nails driven in. He asked no question; his glance had suddenly understood everything. A gleam of the soul discovering the invisible. . . .

The saint took the step that Petit Louis had been about to take and put his arms about his shivering body.

"My poor child ! . . ."

The condemned man did not weep; no tear could have been squeezed forth from his contracted flesh. He was shaking, in the grip of an icy chill, his teeth chattered, his legs gave way beneath him; and if the saint had not held him up, he would have fallen to the ground.

"He takes it badly," whispered the old warder.

The other said nothing : he was seeking for a little saliva in his choking throat.

Petit Louis at last withdrew from the embrace of the saint and dropped on his bed. He was hiccoughing, and they had to give him something to drink. Presently he seemed to grow calmer, and his first words were :

"I wouldn't have believed. . . ."

Magloire Dubourg drew near to him :

"Has life been so good to you that you regret it so much?" he asked, leaning over Louis.

Louis recalled his childhood, his home under the Assistance Publique, the farm, the blows, Paris, the rowdy Paris of the quarters on the hills, poverty, prison. . . .

"Well, yes, I do regret," he growled savagely. "I had the right to live like other people, and it was good, in spite of everything."

The saint sat down at his side.

"But are you sure you won't live any more?" he asked gently, in the same voice that in the old days, under the sunshine, he had used among his humming bees.

The condemned man stared at him, not understanding.

The old man drew him within the shelter of his arms.

"Listen to me, don't tremble," he said in a passionate voice. "On the contrary, be glad. Only one more night and you will escape. Only one more night and you will cease to be the hunted beast you have been ever since your childhood; you will no longer bear the burden of your crime, you will be free of all the vices that you drag about with you; your destiny will no longer be printed on your forehead for all to read, and you will fly away, free at last, to live again, in a better body, a life that you will be able to make happy. It is a new dawn that will rise for you in the narrow window of the scaffold. . . . Be glad and

give thanks to God, my child; only one more night. . . ."

The tense face of the murderer slowly relaxed; he did not yet understand, but his heart was listening. With his open mouth and his attentive air, he looked as though he were watching a breach opening in the walls of his prison.

"But all the same," he repeated, "it's no good for them to kill me. . . ."

"They won't kill you, they will set you free. . . . One human gesture cannot destroy a creature of God. . . ."

A hundred memories rose in the muddled brain of the condemned man. That phrase . . . he had heard it already in Barlincourt. . . . Yes, Saint Magloire used to say that you didn't die, that you only flew from one life to another, that men are like plants that die and come to life again eternally, since God tossed the first grain into the wind. . . .

His eyes fastened on the saint, helplessly. Round his twisted mouth a saffron-yellow spot was spreading.

"Then," he gasped. "You believe that? . . . It's true?" . . .

Saint Magloire seemed to absorb the condemned man into his flaming glance:

"I promise it to you. . . . On my eternal salvation, I swear it to you. . . ."

The bloodless head of the prisoner began once more that tragic swaying back and forth that had overcome him when he learned of the rejection of his appeal.

"Say it again," he murmured in a stifled voice. . . . "Promise me. . . . Again. . . ."

The Apostle had taken his two hands in his own, and in his moving voice he prophesied to the dying man the everlasting course of Life, the comforting return.

"Don't believe them, those who have threatened you with Hell. God is not an executioner. . . . Your crime: thousands of men shared in it with you:

all those who caused you to be born wretched and to grow up among scoundrels. . . . Don't believe those who have told you that we only live once and that God judges us by this single test. . . . This uncertain passage from the cradle to the grave, Destiny is more responsible for it than we are: Destiny who brought us into the world Christian or infidel, rich or poor, generous or envious. . . . Hope, my boy; you will live again. . . . No weapon can reach, no steel can sever the breath of divinity you bear within you. . . . The dead are not dead. . . ."

"Again . . . again . . ." implored Louis, like a frightened child begging to be rocked.

The hands of the old man resting on the shoulders of the prisoner began to tremble.

"Close your eyes, merciful Death is approaching. You are going to join the souls that float around us, that moan in the wind, rustle in the leaves and roam, on certain evenings, through silent houses where people dream. . . . Then, one after the other, the ties that hold your soaring spirit to earth will break. . . . Only two memories left. . . . Now only one, a thread of gossamer swinging in the wind. . . . Then nothing more, forgetfulness, the long rest in heavenly spheres. . . . And then suddenly, the darkness is rent asunder and there comes the resurrection, the eternal miracle. . . ."

Suddenly, Louis gave a convulsive start. A sinister sound, in the street. A cart being unloaded. In a flash, he understood. His head sank down between his shoulders, and he looked at the saint with great terrified eyes, his mouth twisted in a grimace that puckered his cheeks. He tried to rise, but his strength forsook him, and he huddled his face against Magloire Dubourg, making an absurd noise with his sputtering lips. Leaning lightly on his shoulder, the saint pressed him down to his knees and then knelt down beside him.

"Speak to God," said he.

A mysterious distress took hold of the warders, as though they were waiting for something. They watched, but with a mist before their eyes, with straining hearts, shivering under a tingling sensation that froze them to the marrow. They no longer heard the noises outside.

Magloire Dubourg was leaning back, his face upraised to heaven and his arms outstretched. It was hardly possible to see anything in the cell. Then it seemed to them that a faint light appeared round the white head, that all was dying away in the shadows, and that nothing remained but that radiant countenance, in a golden halo.

Then, at the same time, drawn as by a command, they looked at his hands. They started, ashen-faced, their knees shaking. . . . There, in the middle of his bare palms they saw two red spots appearing, two bleeding holes, two marks of nails. The Stigmata.

Overwhelmed, they scarcely breathed; they dared not look at each other.

With clammy hands they raised their caps, and, submissively, bowed their heads. The shuddering that had seized them filled their empty minds with confusion: not a thought remained . . . nothing. Yet, miraculously, the prayers of their childhood came back to them, intact, and their words were added to those of the man whose agony was just beginning.

“. . . I have deeply sinned by thought, by word, and by deed; it is my fault, it is my fault, it is my most grievous fault! . . .”

Outside the prison the assistants could be heard setting up the guillotine.

It is dark red, the colour of wine-lees. The blade, high up, can hardly be seen, like a fang of steel planted in a heavy box. One of the assistants, holding out his lantern at arm's length, lights up the scaffold, piece by piece. The light rises, descends, glides over the wall, is lost in the night. . . .

Near by, at the cross-roads, the hum of the swarming crowd can be heard. Under the dark vault of the prison, the glow of cigarettes flares up and fades away; there are already some people about. No one dares to speak aloud; they whisper.

The assistants, unconcerned, are fixing a plank with sweeping blows of a mallet. One of them is whistling: a little man with the torso of a bruiser. Everyone thinks:

"They are making too much noise, *he* will hear. . . ."

But no one dares to say so, everyone is ashamed. After all, he has committed a murder. . . .

Shadows come and go, furtively, then stop and collect together; spectators come up, to see better; they appraise it with their eyes. It is as though it drew them. They had imagined it massive, very wide, holding the sky between its arms; but no, on the contrary, it is narrow, paltry.

An assistant scatters sawdust, like a café waiter, in the morning, before he begins to sweep. All is ready.

The executioner has just arrived. He wears a bowler hat and a long grey overcoat, creased by travelling. The face of an obsequious petty official, with furtive eyes and a small beard. He assumes a rueful and good-natured air.

"We are not out of the wood yet," he sighs. "Morals have become terribly lax since the War. They will need a few more lessons like this. . . ."

It seems he is paid four hundred francs a head. . . .

Dawn is already approaching; the stars are melting away. One can see groups of people standing about, and the file of soldiers. Some policemen begin to make the crowd move on; the idlers manœuvre for a good view, withdraw, come back again. They have passed the night waiting to see a man beheaded, a living man. . . . Most of them, however, feel distressed; anguish has made them hollow-eyed.

The time must be drawing near. Here are the Prefect, the Procureur, some people from Paris. . . .

"No, sir, you cannot stay, it is definitely forbidden, you know that quite well. . . ."

It is a newspaper photographer whom the commissary is driving away. Among the journalists old Bellières is holding forth. It is his ninety-second execution; he is giving reminiscences: Caserio, the Pollet gang, at Béthune, and his famous adventure in Corsica, where he himself was obliged to take command of the police, the Sub Prefect being inexperienced, and the Procureur having fainted. People are amused, they force themselves to laugh.

Ah! the chaplain. . . . Everyone is silent. Behind the priest they have shut the door again. Now it will only open for the other.

A report is being spread that Saint Magloire has been allowed to spend the last night with the murderer, but no one believes it. They ask questions, they dispute about it.

Five o'clock strikes. Above the houses the sky takes on softer tints. At this moment, no one knows where, on a branch or on the edge of a roof, a bird begins to sing. First a little chirp at waking. Then he twitters as he probably shakes himself, the little dishevelled feather-ball; then when he has settled down, full-throated, he opens with a prelude of piercing trills, and now he is singing with all his heart, disturbing the other nests that shiver into wakefulness.

All eyes are on the look-out for him. Where is he? He should be driven away, with stones. It hurts to listen to these love-lorn roulades of his, in the bashful half-light. His delirious joy oppresses the heart. . . . Ah! at last, he is silent. . . . Has he guessed perchance? The door opens. . . .

In the corridor the saint had taken the boy in his arms to help him to walk. At times he had almost to lift him up.

Louis let himself go. His face was calm, his eyes

very gentle. With bent head he asked, below his breath :

"It's true, eh? You are quite sure?"

And the saint answered ardently :

"Before God, I swear it to you. It is for you that dawn is breaking. The night of your poor life is drawing to its close. All their guards can do nothing; it is finished, you are escaping. . . ."

The narrow corridor pressed them in between its two walls. Behind their doors the prisoners, with beating hearts, must be listening to the noise of the passing footsteps : the atmosphere of a house of mourning, when the body is being carried down. At the end of the corridor a shivering dawn is waiting.

At the top of the steps Magloire made the lad pass in front of him; the chaplain went before them, raising his crucifix, and Louis sought it with his lips. Shut in like a well, the little garden was the colour of ashes, but along the pathway a lantern spread a quivering carpet of light. Under the vault nothing could be seen : a dark cave, where shadows hid themselves.

The heavy bar of the gate dropped with a noise of iron; the folding-doors swung slowly back and the light of early morning appeared, a slender ray at first. Then the livid band widened and a striking picture showed itself, framed in the porch : men shivering with upturned collars, bareheaded. Not a sound. In the distance, on the cobblestones, the impatient stamp of a horse's hoof. A great horrified waiting, under the grey sky.

Petit Louis, on the verge of collapse, had stopped short, his legs giving way.

He weighed heavily on the arms of Magloire Dubourg.

"It's true, eh? You are sure?"

The saint embraced him and pushed him before him.

"God has already forgiven you. You will live again. Be good and be happy."

Turning to the left, the condemned man suddenly saw the machine. No broad space about it. A look of abject intimacy, some people crowded round near the sprinkled sawdust. And against the framework, a man standing alone, his arm upraised.

Suddenly, in the profound silence, a terrifying cry arose :

“Louis ! my man !”

Down there, lost in the crowd, Julie had called, warned by the sudden silence. A shudder of horror ran down every spine. The condemned man had heard, they saw his face change.

Then, in fear of weakening, unwilling to awake from the peace into which the promises of the saint had plunged him, he snatched himself from his arms, and wild-eyed, with clenched teeth, ran stumbling up the scaffold, in little leaps, with shackled feet. He wanted to be done with it, quickly, without thinking, without waiting. He sprang forward. The hardened assistant who was getting ready to push him along with his two massive fists had not even time to touch him; Louis had thrown himself alone on the block, his neck outstretched.

A dark mass descending. All eyes are closed. It is over.

To the disgraceful sound of the blade, a woman's shriek replied, very far away, behind the police. Blood. . . . They throw the head, still living, -into the basket. The assistants hurry. The horse at the cart snorts and stiffens his legs. A great sponge is passed over the knife. How ugly they are, all of them, how horribly ugly in their human fashion. . . .

After the execution, Magloire Dubourg fell into general contempt. For the Barlincourt workmen, the permit (illegal, after all) which had been granted to the saint, was a proof of his connection with the Government; as for the tradespeople, this interest in an assassin made them furious.

"He didn't take so much trouble for the victim," squeaked Bégin, the baker.

François Dubourg himself had suffered from the behaviour of his brother: when the first episode of "Monsieur de Cambrelus" had been shown in the cinemas, and the portrait of the author thrown on the screen, there had been a diabolical hullabaloo, and the novelist, who was in the theatre with his mistress, had paled under the volley of hisses. As for Mme. Dubourg, she received threatening letters by every post, and directly she set foot out of doors she felt that the police were watching her.

In political circles, the President of the Council, by giving the compromising permit to Magloire, was regarded as having acted with extreme skill. People recalled the precedent of Marcelin Albert, the vineyard agitator, who had lost standing for having spent a quarter of an hour in the office of Georges Clemenceau.

The newspapers had published further notes by Dr. Blum on the case of Julien Fortunat, called "The Trembler," who had relapsed into his old epileptic fits, and whose St. Vitus' Dance had been, if anything, aggravated, after several months' diminution, "which was to be attributed solely to a great nervous shock such as might have been caused by an accident or any other violent emotion."

The beggar had re-established himself on the steps of the church, pallid and trembling as before the miracle, but he was no longer indifferent and submissive under his affliction, as he had formerly been. He had known some months of normal existence, had lived like other men, had tasted happiness—rumour even credited him with a mistress, a farm-girl!—and now he suffered torture; in every lad that passed by he saw the man he had been himself, and, racked by regrets, devoured by envy, he wept with rage as he crouched under his porch.

As soon as he caught sight of the saint he began to

growl, and Milot had been obliged to turn him out of the café. Besides, he was offensive to the customers, with his crooked mouth and his twitching limbs.

"And then, if you beg your living," Milot argued, reasonably enough, "it is a pretty thing to go and spend all your takings in the public house."

Although the beadle still continued his determined campaign by writing the benefactions of the saint on the blackboard, which he followed up on the next day with insults intended for M. Aubernon, everyone in Barlincourt had thrown over the Evangelist. The strike which he had brought about unintentionally had overwhelmed the workmen like a catastrophe; it is only for the rich that wounds to the purse are not fatal. Poverty had brought degradation to everyone. Girls who were tired of their miserable existence had gone off to Paris to a life of debauchery. Housewives were in hospital, children were boarded out in schools and work-rooms. The strikers, who had not all been taken on again, were like vicious dogs ready to tear each other to pieces, for the mere pleasure of biting.

The young men, farmers' sons, now amused themselves by insulting the saint when they met him. They dared each other to approach close to him, as on Midsummer Eve they dared each other to spring across the bonfire. M. Quatrepomme contemplated with a feeling of relief the return of peace to his parish, but he was no longer very confident as to the result of the coming elections. Not only had he all the socialists against him now, but he was also the enemy of the Clericals, who reproached him with having given refuge to the schismatics; on account of Aubernon he had fallen foul of all the manufacturers of the district, and on account of Milot all the old soldiers opposed him.

"Besides, it is quite simple," sighed the Mayor unhappily. "Never have people hated each other so bitterly as since the time when their saint came to preach good-will here. . . ."

Magloire Dubourg, feeling this hostility, and warned

by Milot, who hid nothing from him, showed himself as little as possible.

He no longer received visitors. However, on certain days at nightfall, an ecclesiastic might be seen alighting from a carriage in front of the villa: it was the Vicar-General, who came to talk with the saint. The Church was now congratulating itself on not having acted hastily. Everything would come right, in time. The Vicar-General told the old man again and again that he ought to acknowledge the mistakes which had arisen out of his own altruism, to avoid controversy and go back quietly to Africa, where his presence could do so much good.

Father Labry also came to see him.

The Evangelist, to avoid any unpleasant incidents, now only attended Low Mass, kneeling quite at the back of the nave, at the paupers' bench.

One Sunday, however, he came to High Mass. All the pious church-goers, turning round in their seats, stared malevolently at him, and when young Pelé entered, with his aunt at his side, both in deep mourning, a murmur arose. The saint, kneeling with his head in his hands, remained unconscious of it.

Abbé Choisy, who had been reproached with cowardice by his flock, rehabilitated himself that day in the eyes of his parishioners. He had never been so eloquent. With flushed cheeks, stammering in his eagerness, and waving the great white wings of his surplice, he launched his condemnation.

"Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves," he cried, brandishing his book.

Young Pelé began to bellow, some of the women, on the verge of tears, blew their noses; and, had they been anywhere else except in church, the handful of peasants in the labourers' seats would certainly have seized the Evangelist by the collar and thrown him out.

As they left the church after the office, the people crowding round the holy-water stoup stared at the

tall old man. Coming forward with his heavy step, he dipped his fingers into the water and offered them, moistened, to a woman who was behind him. She recoiled quickly, and with an evil look hid her hands under her cape.

"Bah! Bah!" cried a raucous voice in front of them.

It was the Trembler, who was dragging himself along, grimacing; and he had dropped his wooden bowl to shake a clenched fist.

.

One evening before dinner—the evicted workman was playing "Nina la Belle" on his accordion; primroses jewelled the short grass and on the branches the buds of March were opening—the gate clanged and Gérard appeared on the path.

His heart ached as he stood before the house. The shutters remained closed, as on the day of the funeral; he dared not look towards the outbuildings. In the old days, all the joy of the villa seemed to run to welcome him as he opened the gate: Yvonne's laugh, the barking of the dogs, the scent of the baskets of flowers. And always the luscious rattle of pots and pans that rose from the basement.

There, on the terrace, Madame Dubourg would be lying on her couch, too lazy to rise; M. Dubourg would appear at his window, in his careless attire, and call out a greeting. Gérard thought also of M. Van den Kris, and his glance hardened under his drawn brows.

All his happy youth lay encompassed in this great garden. The shrubs had grown up with him, every clump of bushes held a memory, and as he rounded the bend in the little path under the pines he automatically put out his hand, knowing that a branch which always caught him in the face stretched out there.

Soon the garden would flower again; the wallflowers would fill the baskets with a thousand golden butterflies; the lilacs would stretch forth their perfumed sprays, and yet the shutters would not swing open in

the morning sun, when Étienne placidly raked the paths.

The waterless well, the low wall of the kitchen garden, the three steps, the big lawn. . . . He saw it all again, as it had been on the day of the miracles : the swarming multitude, the noise, the small boys perched in the trees, the sick people on their stretchers. The Dubourgs, in the drawing room, had looked at those thousands of panting beings, their hearts well-nigh bursting with pride.

What remained of all that, now that the fever had subsided? . . .

The young man mastered his emotion and entered the villa. Saint Magloire was seated with a book on his knees.

"How do you do, uncle?"

The old man looked at him, blinking his eyes.

"Why, it's you, Gérard. Good-day, my boy."

This unexpected visit took him by surprise. He feared some new disaster.

"It is nothing serious that brings you? Are your parents well?"

Gérard could not keep back his distress : his voice broke in a sob.

"I think so," he stammered.

Then suddenly he recovered his self-control :

"I do not see much of them. Father, as you know, hardly ever comes home now, and mother was so unhappy that for some time . . ." His voice began to tremble once more. "She has also been living her own life," he said at last, mumbling the words.

He pulled himself up stiffly, very pale, and, feeling two big tears rising, he blinked his eyelids quickly and turned his head away. All his stifled sorrow rose in his throat, but he resisted proudly. In order to do what he intended doing, he must play the man. But the strain was too much for him. A fit of trembling shook him, his full heart burst into sobs, and, overcome, he dropped weeping into an arm-chair.

"Oh, we were so happy, before you came," he moaned, choking with tears. "You don't know how happy we were. Now it is all over, never again. . . . Why, I ought to have known you would bring misfortune, the very day you arrived. . . . Father forbade Yvonne to laugh in front of you; one had no right to enjoy oneself in the presence of a saint. . . . Well, you can be satisfied, she never laughed again, my poor little sister; she never will laugh again. . . ."

The saint, full of pity, came close to the young man, and sought to take his head between his kindly hands; but Gérard, ashamed of his weakness, pulled himself away and rose, his cheeks still wet with tears.

"Leave me alone," he said roughly. "I am not asking you to comfort me. If you hadn't done us so much harm, I should not be weeping now. I had never wept before I knew you; this was a house of joy. And you had to come and destroy everything. . . . It's your fault that the Aubernons wouldn't let their son associate with Yvonne any more; it's your fault that my sister killed herself; it's your fault that father has begun to behave badly; it's your fault that mother has gone; it's your fault that Mother Pelé is dead; that the whole countryside has gone through months of misery, that some of the workmen are still in prison, it has all come about through you; and it's your fault, too, if at this moment I am going to take vengeance on the Aubernons, that I am going to run the risk of deportation."

Magloire sprang up and seized Gérard by the shoulders.

"What are you going to do?" he asked anxiously. "You are not going to commit some act of madness?"

The young man freed himself and looked at his uncle with a resolute air.

"Oh! no, no act of madness, far from that. . . . And it will be a fine thing, too, for the nephew of a saint. . . . But I'm no saint, you understand. I

want to avenge us all. Have you done anything, you who are so just, to get the Aubernons punished? No. You forgive the blackguards. Well, I don't forgive. . . . And, since all my life is in ruin, I will at least have vengeance before . . ."

The saint wanted to hold him back, but Gérard evaded him and opened the door :

"Good-bye, uncle," he called out from the foot of the steps. "There is no longer a Dubourg family."

He was already running down the path. The sky, behind the trees, was blood red. A keen wind was blowing.

"Gérard !" the old man called twice.

The boy did not even turn round. The clang of the gate could be heard. . . . He was gone.

When Étienne came to bring dinner he saw the saint kneeling in a corner of the room, his head on an arm-chair. It was quite dark.

The gardener lighted the lamp. He moved the plates about, he coughed. Still the saint did not move. Usually Etienne withdrew without saying anything, knowing that it was impossible to rouse the saint from his meditations; but for some days Saint Magloire had been so depressed, so feeble, that he was sorry for him.

"You really ought to eat your soup while it is hot," he said. "It's a pity Mr. Gérard didn't stay to dinner with you; that would have given you an appetite."

The Evangelist rose.

"Did you see him?" he asked. "Did he speak to you?"

Old Étienne nodded his head.

"Why, yes. . . . He looked quite upset. . . . He shook hands hard with me and he said : 'To-night my little sister will be pleased !' I rather wondered what he meant. . . ."

He was standing near the glass door, looking out with an air of abstraction, when he suddenly opened his eyes wide.

"What's happening?" he wondered.

Then he cried aloud :

"Why, there's a fire !"

He was already out on the terrace, with the saint at his heels. They gazed with anxious hearts at a great blaze that illumined the sky, from the other side of the town. The windows of the little lodge were opened and the men were leaning out and gesticulating.

"It's at Aubernon's. . . . The factory is on fire. . . ."

Without stopping to put on their hats, they started off at full speed. The burning timber yards set the night on fire up to the very clouds. The church bell had begun to sound the alarm and the firemen were buckling on their belts as they ran to the Town Hall.

"Oh, look ! How it is spreading !"

The fire at one bound must have reached the sheds under which the tarpaulins were stocked, and the whole sky was lit up by a disastrous dawn. It was as easy to see in the streets as in broad daylight.

Magloire Dubourg did not follow the gardener. He had suddenly understood whose hand it was that had kindled that flame, and seated on one of the steps of the terrace, filled with despair to the very depths of his soul, he watched the red pulse of the fire beating in the sombre sky.

.

Three days later, when Saint Magloire crossed Barlincourt at dusk on his way to the station, the factory was still smoking. Nothing remained of the workshops but blackened skeletons; of the timber-yards, nothing but a few big piles of charred wood in the midst of a huge swamp in which the workmen were floundering. It was stated that the insurance would hardly cover one-third of the loss.

The Evangelist stood for a moment in thought before the huge devastated space. From a distance some loafers watched him.

"You haven't heard anything fresh about Gérard?" he asked, turning to Milot, who was carrying his bag.

The cripple replied sadly :

"Nothing much. . . . At the Town Hall they have had a telephone message that Monsieur Gérard had confessed everything to the judge in Paris. . . . He is plucky enough, that lad."

Adèle, who was accompanying them, groaned.

"My poor little dear, that I've known since he was in long clothes. . . . But there's nothing but misfortune in the world any more!"

Magloire had started off again, with bowed shoulders. . . .

Here and there they passed people who growled out insults.

"A good journey and a good wind to you!" cried Bégin, the baker, from his doorstep.

It was only seven o'clock when they reached the platform, and the train for Paris was not yet signalled. The station was dozing round its glowing stoves. Outside, the wind blew in sudden gusts, carrying through the night a sharp smell of burning. The flame of the lanterns flickered; over the face of the clock the hour was trailing its two weary fingers.

At this moment when he was to leave for ever the district where, hardly a year ago, he had arrived amidst tempestuous cheering, believing that he was called to regenerate the world, Magloire felt himself crushed beneath a load of mortal sorrow. He was leaving behind him lives as desolate as those great ruined timber-yards from which the smoke was still rising. Why all this mourning? He had brought nothing but offers of pardon, words of love. . . .

Standing at the edge of the railway track, he looked at his shadow. How can a man believe that he will be able to shake the world when his shadow takes up so little room on a deserted platform? It follows or precedes you, like a faithful dog, and it is only in the lights of the world that it appears for a moment to be

larger. Slowly the saint raised his arms, and his silhouette traced on the ground a strange cross of shadow. Motionless, he gazed at the example. . . . Would not that redeeming shadow, however, cover the earth for all eternity? . . . And how many martyrs also, how many tears, how much blood ! . . .

He came back to Adèle and Milot, who, with aching hearts, were sitting on a bench.

"I have sown suffering on my way," he said to them. "I have wounded those whom I loved and I ask their forgiveness. But I was only obeying; it was for the happiness of all and for the glory of God. When a man wishes to sow, he sees nothing at first but the sharp ploughshare that digs the soil. Before you judge me, wait till the seed has sprung up. . . ."

"Judge you !" protested Milot, who had risen to his feet. "No one would dare, certainly not in my presence. You are above everyone."

The maid-servant, who was weeping with her face hidden in her handkerchief, murmured some broken words.

"For me you will always be a saint."

The Apostle looked at her sadly.

"And yet, am I not responsible for your suffering, Adèle, my poor friend," he said in a toneless voice. "Responsible also for the death of my poor Yvonne, responsible for everything. . . . Gérard said so : there is no longer a Dubourg family, and it is my fault."

He was silent for a moment, then he fell, heavily, like a log, on his knees at the feet of the old servant.

"I beg your forgiveness, my poor Adèle, and I beg the forgiveness of all those whom I have caused to weep. You will tell them that at your feet I have promised to pray for them till the day of my death, and afterwards, beyond the grave. . . ."

The tears were falling, down to his bushy beard, and his clasped hands trembled. The old servant released herself quickly, and she and Milot, taking the old man by the arms, forced him to rise.

"You, to ask forgiveness from us, oh, never!" cried Adèle. "All my life, do you hear? I have never endured so much misery as in these last months. Well, all the same, that will be my dearest memory, because it seems to me that I have come near to God. . . . It is we who ought to be at your feet, asking you to bless us."

The saint raised his hands above their two bowed heads, over which the wind passed caressingly, and his lips moved in prayer.

At the entrance to the goods dépôt, some of the railway clerks were standing together whispering, with low bursts of laughter. Only Milot noticed them, and turning his head towards them, he growled:

"They'll never be anything but poor devils of voters."

Adèle had begun to weep again, choking with sorrow.

"I know I shall never see you again," she gasped. "And it's as if I were going to live always in darkness."

"Have confidence," answered the saint. "The time will come. What does it matter if I have not been understood, if they are driving me away? My words will remain in the hearts of a few, and by loving kindness eleven disciples were enough to conquer the world. . . ."

In the chilly silence of evening, nothing more was to be heard but the tiresome ringing of the telegraph; the tired eyes of the signal discs seemed ready to close, and, on this deserted platform, the saint thought of that other platform where all must embark, some day, for the unknown journey. . . . He would have been glad to die, for he felt that his task was ended.

"My God!" he murmured, "forgive my weakness! When my eyes had once beheld Thee, nothing else in the world ought to have given me pleasure."

All was submerged in shadow. Nothing could be seen but the outlines of trees, the red and green signals and the gleaming rails, the colour of rain. The smell of burning still hung in the air.

A pulley creaked, a bell tinkled, and a clerk opened the door of the waiting room.

"Persan-Beaumont, Paris," he cried.

A few travellers appeared on the platform, loaded with packages. The station began to wake up.

"Let us go," sighed Magloire Dubourg. . . . "The time has come. . . . Good-bye, my good friends, my only followers!"

Adèle, in tears, clung to him.

"You will pray for my poor Louis, won't you? Promise me!"

Milot said nothing. With clenched jaws, he was choking back his tears.

"Let us say good-bye, my son," said the saint.

And, as the train ran into the station, he clasped the cripple in his arms in a close embrace.

Magloire Dubourg opened the first door that came to hand—a third-class compartment—and got in. A man was dozing in a corner.

From the carriage, leaning his broad shoulders out of the window, he continued to talk to them.

"Above all," he urged them, "don't regret me. Only remember my words and repeat them. . . . He who speaks in the Name of Christ bears within himself His Body and His Blood. . . . Good-bye. . . . Good-bye!"

The train whistled. With a wrench, the long shining ribbon stretched itself out and began to glide along the rails. The luminous carriages passed by, quickly, quickly, more quickly still. . . . Then, the black luggage van. . . . Then, low down, two red lamps that grew smaller and smaller till they were no more than two pin-points. Then, nothing. . . .

"Let us go," said Milot tonelessly.

And, as they went out, he said to the clerk who stared at him:

"You may well grin, donkey-face: you have just made a martyr."

EPILOGUE

Bordeaux, March 19. Magloire Dubourg left France this morning, on board the *Salzburg*, on his way to Dakar. An old missionary accompanied him.

His departure took place quite unobserved.

(*Havas.*)





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